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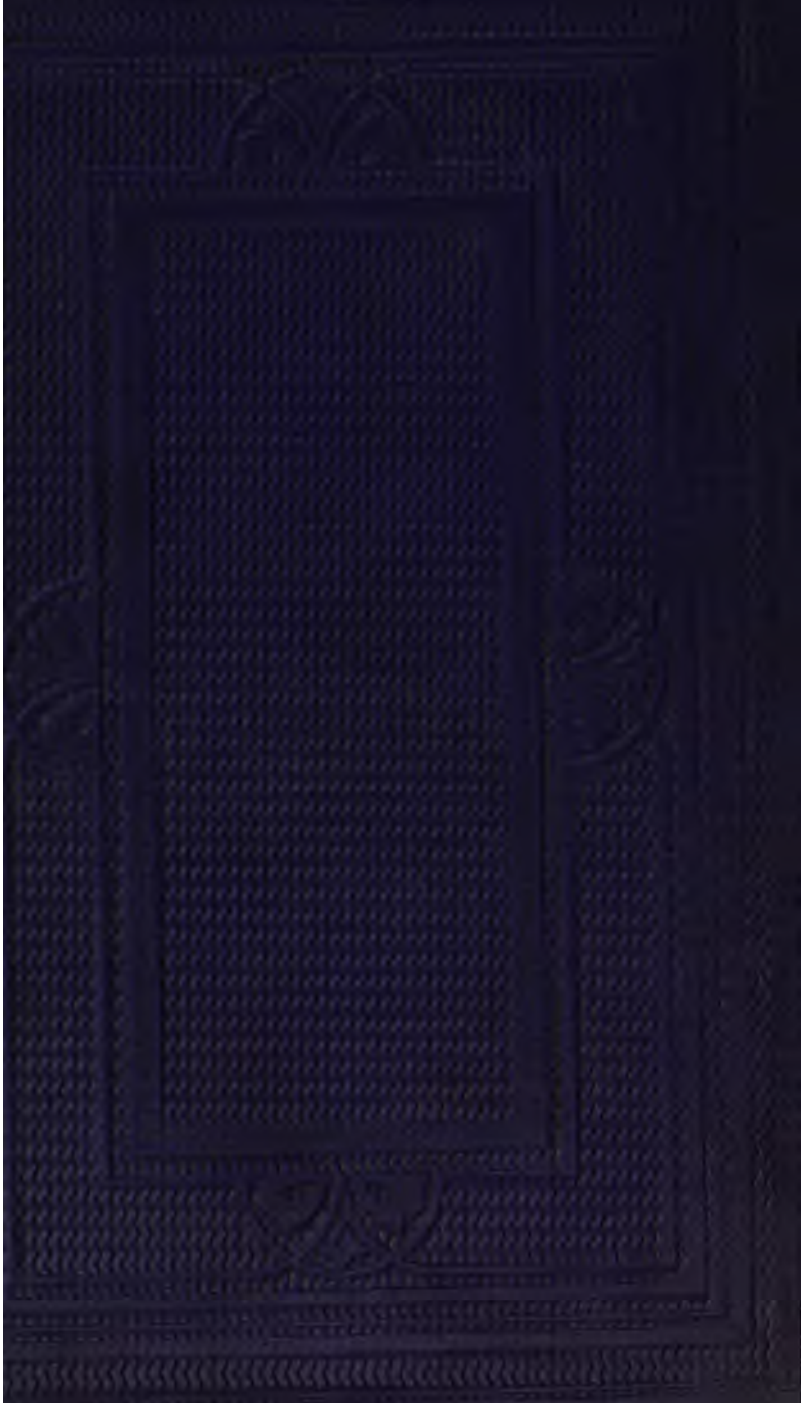

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PREFACE.

"TWENTY Years in the Church!" But are not the Laity members of the Church as well as the Clergy?

I reply, that the precise expression, "being in the Church," is generally understood of the Clergy alone. The title is more descriptive than any other I could select.

The sketches are from life. Real persons and scenes have been before me, and in some parts I have been obliged to resort to new combinations to spare private feeling.

I have long observed, that there is a reality and interest in any plain newspaper report, as of a trial or a shipwreck, which vividly contrasts with any page of fiction, however ingenious.

I therefore resolved to tell "things that I did know," and once more to adopt that Photographic or Pre-Raphaelite style to which the success of my "Recollections of College Days" was chiefly owing.

If the life of the Rev. Henry Austin contains a moral, it is because no man's life can be set forth without one. But my friends need not be at all suspicious of anything like powders in my Currant Jelly.

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July 20th, 1859.

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Thirty Reviewers, nearly all more or less favourable, have assisted me by a notice. In one point, five out of six agree, namely,—in praising the "life-like" and the "intense reality" of the story.

I have simply to say, that I could easily furnish a key to every character, and give the original of nearly every speech. If I am told that "enough is not made of Ellen, or of Brereton," I reply that two sources of interest are available to a writer:—the one, dramatic effect, the other, truth and nature; and I determined that I would not sacrifice truth by drawing characters I had never known, and in positions in which I had never seen them.

I am happy to accept the early demand for a Second Edition as a proof that, like the child delighted with a fairy tale, a reader never so fully gives vent to his feelings of admiration as when he is satisfied that it is "all true."

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I HAVE gratefully to acknowledge a demand for a Third Edition within the first year of publication. The objection that all the experience of "twenty years" is not contained in this volume has been met by *Elkerton Rectory*, in which work the Rev. Henry Austin appears in a new sphere of action, and surrounded by a new set of characters.

J. P.

July 20th, 1860.

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TWENTY YEARS IN THE CHURCH.

CHAPTER I.

HOW I WAS BORN, BRED, PUT TO SCHOOL, AND SENT TO COLLEGE.

My name is Henry Austin. I was born of honest and respectable parents—a fact of which I should be the more proud, if the same thing did not happen to be said of too many characters, even in the *Newgate Calendar*. The Austins were reputed a good Berkshire family. We could not boast of the blood of any Norman in our veins: however, if I may believe what I have lately read, that they were only "a parcel of savage pirates and filthy thieves," so much the better for our constitutions.—It was thought a great thing that no trade had ever yet been known in our family, though the natural result was that each generation had more pride and fewer pence.

We had no title—no handle to our name: so, we were reduced to extract as much honour as we could out of the indefinite article, and I often heard I was "*An* Austin." Some old china, some battered plate, one pap-boat having the mark of my grandmother's tooth in it, some scraps of point lace, rusty swords, and Indian ornaments, all served to connect us with the past, and with the world's history, as also to astonish the maids, and to make them teach us the earliest of all nursery lessons, that we had a right "to hold our little heads up."

All I know of my birth is, that I was born in lambing season. My father had taken to gentleman-farming, and was too busy about his sheep to know what had happened in-doors for some hours. Indeed, I was no great novelty, so I was not made much

of, being the sixth child, though only five lived long enough to have a turn at the baby-clothes.

I can easily describe our house. As you whiz, grind, or screech along a railway, you often see a tea-caddy house of red brick, with a portico in the middle, and wings at the sides, all alone and dreary, looking like a lunatic asylum on a small scale: indeed, madness may well breed in such places; for, muddy brains, like ditch-water, grow bad and "maggoty" from sheer stagnation. Well, ours was a house of this kind; grass grew and cows strayed on the gravel—even the door-bell would have rusted, had it not been for the letter-carrier. Visitors came so seldom it made one nervous, and nothing was ever quite in order when they did come. And this little disappointment, however trivial it may seem to some people, was really among the number of my mother's trials in this life.

Perhaps the yellow satin had been—how provoking!—covered up only that very morning, and the drawing-room fire only that day countermanded. Then the dinner-parties—we could not contrive with less than one every three months—were something serious. For, considering the stupid servants, no one to help, everything to give out and polish, and everything to put away again, the waste of the professed cook, and the airs she gave herself, as well as the riot and "high-life-below-stairs" with the "pampered menials," who came two to every carriage—the infliction was so cruel, that what with our annoyance at blunders past, and our dread of more mishaps at the party next to come, it really embittered my poor mother's existence. But no matter: on we went; still grumbling, still doing it, like other people, to the end of the chapter.

Such was the scene of my rearings. From an early age my father intended me for the Church. Aunt Charlotte, who was always spoken of as a religious woman in our family (a little religion went a long way in those days), used to visit us about once a-year, and was anxiously looked for, like other maiden aunts, as the natural source of sugar-plums and playthings: though occasionally she disappointed some of the elder ones by taking a Bible and Prayer-book, with clasps and morocco binding, from its silver-paper wrapper, and presenting it as a more appropriate present than tops and dolls. A child's face at such a moment were a study for a painter.

This good aunt used also to inquire about family prayers and Sunday arrangements, and would try to convey a delicate insinuation that, with all reverence for our parents, we children might

venture to have a little more regard for our souls' health than some people. Now, being this kind of good aunt, what wonder that she should at once accept the news of Harry being "intended for the Church," as a virtual challenge for no small display of theological polemics!

"Intended for the Church?" she exclaimed. "My dear Austin, how can you talk so? That thoughtless boy in the holland pinafore?"

"But he won't be a boy, or thoughtless either, always, Charlotte."

"My dear brother, how can you tell? Dear me! intended for the Church! Why, he is as giddy as his own top, and has manifested, of course, no kind of disposition whatever."

"Now there you are wrong, Charlotte," said my father; "only last week he came sprawling down in the nursery, and almost broke his neck, from a pyramid of chairs, piled up as a pulpit, and he with the nurse's apron on as a surplice."

Of course the reply was very obvious, but the joke was very discomposing: and meanwhile I played about and spun my top, very thankful that I was not thought old enough for one of Aunt Charlotte's Prayer-books.

My father might have argued, that the man who seriously purposed to train the most promising of his sons for the ministry purposed a good work, and that if any disqualification appeared in course of years, the destination might be reconsidered; that as to regarding the Church as a livelihood, as well as a sphere of usefulness, if God had been pleased to join duty and comfort together, why need man put the same asunder? Also that, supposing the only alternative to be tried—supposing all youths to be trained alike, and a decided call or inward prompting to be awaited as the only grounds for special preparation, and that too at an age when things serious find no genial sphere, but require, at the best, both culture and forcing—that this plan for recruiting our army of heavenly warriors was so chimerical, and would give our arch-enemy such advantage, that it were hard to believe the great Captain of our salvation ever intended so exclusive a selection.

All this my father might have argued; and supposing the decisions of this life, even the most momentous of them, were ordinarily drawn from legitimate premises, like the answer to a rule-of-three sum, such might have been expected as the reasoning process which made me what—ah, what!—I am.

But men act from mixed motives. I was thought too tender-hearted for a doctor: as to the army, and being a "captain bold,"

"not one of them," said my father, "I ever knew, could 'keep a one-pound note in his regimental small-clothes.'" Brother Tom was booked by Uncle Ben to be a lawyer, and it only remained to make Harry the parson. Indeed, my father's associations ran that way. His nose had been (in visions) "tickled with tithe pig-tail." "Fat Rector" rang in his ears, and formed an adjective and substantive indissoluble on his tongue. Besides, parsons were usually steady-going men, and hereon hung a tale.

Wherever the family tree has many branches, perched at the end of one of them sits a bird of ill omen—foreboding storms; croaking prophecies, like Cassandra's, never believed till too late; or, raising uncomfortable sensations of future woe, to take the taste out of present pleasures; and that bird—whose neck every one, times out of number, has longed to twist—is, *the* man of business; or family trustee, executor, or adviser in ordinary; and is generally called "Old So-and-so." Such was the family office discharged by my poor father. He grew year by year more rigid and more strict,—so, of course, more unpopular. His standard of prudence was anything but a sliding scale. He expected the same "making both ends meet," however fast a man's family outgrew his income. He eyed on the dining-table an extra pudding or a side-dish, less as a compliment to his visit than as a premonitory symptom of certain ruin.

We may easily suppose he was no favourite; and once when a family gathering was proposed for Christmas-day, my mother slily hinted that she hoped the pudding would prove a little better mixture than the company. So, it came to pass that my father was the family martyr. He was indeed a very—yes, a very useful—ay, an invaluable man in the family; but no one liked him the better for all that: rather say, they had a distant respect for him. Cousin Jane was cool to him, because he would not shift her consols into her brother-in-law John Mill's business. John Mills, having suspended cash payments almost as soon as my father's "crabbed letter" was received, wore ever after a most enforced civility. Aunt Charlotte secretly blamed him for her single-blessedness. She was once engaged to a charming young clergyman, but my father argued that his four hulking pupils ate as much as they paid for, and could in no manner of ways enter into any decent marriage settlement. In short, nearly all the circle had found him a marplot at some time or other; and, though foolish and fatal were the plots he marred, no allowance was made for that. The only relative who stood up for him was a clerical brother-in-law, a man of facts and figures, who never outran, so

never worried him for indulgences. The even tenour of this staid rector's ways won upon my father's mind, and was one more argument for the profession of the Church.

But did this man of business aforesaid ever calculate the prizes of the Church as he would the prizes of a lottery? Did he ever compare the sum total of Church preferment with the cost of education, which is as the purchase-money of a ticket to entitle his son to draw? No, never! otherwise he would have learnt that every farthing expended in the hope of a return would be a most unprofitable investment. Better far have bought me an annuity and left my labour disposable for other earnings. In other words, he would have found that the clergy, as a body, give their services for little or nothing—a truly wonderful instance of class generosity; save that very few clergymen are at all aware how the ghost of Cocker would frown upon their investments.

For all these reasons, I was "intended for the Church." I grant the reasons were bad enough; but how often is it that poor human nature acts on better?

"Then you admit that your parents did not give you from childhood any special training or education for the holy calling thus intended?"

Certainly they did not; and considering how such religious training is commonly attempted by persons most likely to put this question, I consider it a happy thing that I had none of it. A model for a religious book for a child is found in the more serious pages of *Robinson Crusoe*. Crusoe's finding a Bible, and having his mind awakened to a sense of religion, arises so naturally from the incidents of the tale, that a child falls insensibly into the same train of thought: whereas, any formal paragraphs, intended expressly for his instruction, would be skipped and passed by as a sham. On the contrary, a youth who is often said to have had inestimable advantages in a religious family, has, perhaps, been sickened with serious advice out of time and out of season, and has heard the name of the Almighty so often associated with childish peccadillos of tops and marbles, that the spell is broken for ever.

I have known sons of evangelical pastors—men revered for their piety all the country round; and I have known not a few of those sons wring their parents' hearts with deeds of shame, till they would say, "Would they had never been born!" And to what was this cruel disappointment owing? Simply to this: If once habitually by word, look, or deed, you demand of a child the seriousness and perfection of later years, your unreasonable

demand is met by a counterfeit supply, and you receive a discount in sheer hypocrisy. What must be that character which results from acting a lie in contempt of the highest sanction all the day long? Still, such is the popular notion of religious training—the sons of even thoughtless, worldly men, have, in my opinion, no spiritual disadvantages to compare with such enforced religion.

But we were educated less by the ear than by the eye. Take warning, parents; it is not what you say, but what you mean, what you are and what you do, that your child will follow. So, we had teaching by an example of perfect sincerity and truth. As to truth, my poor mother was all transparency; she could no more deceive than her favourite brindled cow: and she wore exactly the same guileless and innocent expression of calm serenity and contentment.

What my mother said was a sun-picture of the truth. My father used to say he could read the very process of her thoughts, like watching bees in a glass hive: he, too, was an honest man, upright and straightforward in all his course of life, but not so honest as my mother. My father was honest out of principle; but my mother was honest because she could not help it—just like the cow. Had there been no law and no gospel, my mother would have been honest all the same; indeed her verity and truth, and her simple artlessness, were quite a joke in the family.

My mother was one of the old school; her education had been rather useful than ornamental. I do not undervalue the elegancies of life; but, Music where there is no ear, Drawing where there's no correct eye, and miscellaneous scraps of everything which you may draw out in a moment, like a skein from a thread-paper, and leave no trace behind, this kind of accomplishments,—especially when they are made the daily vehicle of an insidious poison to the soul, as if display and effect were the beginning and the end of life to those dear creatures, who only want some fond direction and a genial sphere to bless and grace the goings out and comings in of harassed and laborious man—all this tinsel and French varnish might well give place to Mrs. Glass and household lore.

"What we want," said Napoleon, "is wise mothers." How many mothers rear their daughters without resource, teaching them to regard all they learn as a means to an end, and that a very precarious end; one often not realised at all, and yet more frequently a compromise—the name without the dignity, to say nothing of the happiness of married life. "Hope delayed makes the heart sick." Moonshine visions present themselves—the morbid creations of distempered brains—their present state being wretched,

they conclude some other must be happy. They think there is a cup of bliss for them, if they could but find it. Then, some think of being "Sisters of Charity," though fine-grown girls in the "School of Scandal;" others must be lady-teachers, themselves having everything to learn; while other relics of the "Middle Ages" sigh for retreats, and the way to Rome, or think their case would be suited by something more akin to their own Mediæval system.

I am not describing all ladies—not those who soberly and piously do home duties first, and find time to help the clergy afterwards; but only the silly daughters of silly mothers, who know no home duties, and are grievously disappointed in not being themselves the silly parents of another silly generation.—"I have no patience with such girls," said my mother; "nervous, idle, and sighing all day long. In my time, we were set to work the Ten Commandments on a sampler; my pretty little cherub breathing 'Amen' at the bottom was pronounced excellent. As to being nervous, why no one used to think of being nervous under sixty, or fifty-five at the very least! You would say we had no accomplishments, but I am sure we had quite enough; for, whether it is a quarter's this or a quarter's that, or something ological the other, it all goes off before the first baby: and a good thing too, or I am sure the dear little innocent would starve. To 'accomplish' a husband, that is the meaning of it all. Not that I think it often does. Instead of that, we were so taught as to win a husband after we had married him; for, when you are as old as I am, my dears, you will know that he is never half won before. When the table-cloth is in holes, the dinner all spoilt, your money very short, and your bills very long, you must be wonderfully accomplished to make up for that."

As to religious impressions and devotional exercises, our catechisings, and collects, and readings, besides twice at church, or the whole service at home on rainy Sundays, and above all, a Blair's sermon in the evening, while we, understanding not a word, fidgeted and yawned our little heads half off—all this went on with such perseverance and regularity that, seeing our parents never could do it without an urgent motive, and we thought it marvellous they could do it at all, since they were not, like us, obliged—nothing could have done more to make a deep impression on our youthful minds.

Certainly, this does not seem much to set down as the sum and substance of my moral and religious training for the ministry from an early age; and I have only to add, that we were

encouraged and patted on the head when we did well, and patted somewhere else when we did ill. Still, I am fully satisfied, if that would not do nothing would. Here was enough to drop the seed to spread into a mighty tree—enough to give the true leaven to leaven every habit and every feeling of the future man.

Such, then, was our education in-doors; but out of doors were influences very active, though very subtle, and not the less educational because operating without books, or rods, or classes—not paid for by the quarter, nor even set down in a long list of extras. There was our grey and ivy-mantled village church—my pet jackdaw was bred in the tower of it; there was also the long avenue and the rookery, down which the Sunday schools and the red cloaks of Molly Woodman, Betty Milsom, and Susan Graves, formed a Sunday procession in honour of our holy cause. All looked reality! Reality? The Sabbath bell and Sabbath throng seemed as real and as natural as the circling of the cawing rooks; and the old church, which seemed to sink deeper and deeper as the gravedigger threw up earth around its buttresses, appeared to grow as naturally out of the earth as the very elms that shed their deep shade around its walls.

Thus I used to read "sermons in stones," or if not sermons, the best "evidences of Christianity"—the most impressive and the most lasting—that any Paley or any Butler ever wrote. Yet, how little were those rural dames and village children conscious of the impression they were making on my childish mind! The square pew to our right represented the testimony of Captain Townsend, and his large house and frequent visitors, to the truth. Sir Edward Astill appeared regularly, with his tall sons and well-flounced daughters, on the other side: so, between rich and poor, I saw a host of monitors. Though one thing jarred on my young and, so far, uncorrupted feelings, namely, that the footmen and coachmen of those gentlemen came in late and went out early—a practice which was pointedly expressed by the Rev. Sydney Smith, when he said, "We are all equal in the house of God, but at ten minutes to one our servants must go for our cabs." These respectable church-goers were, in one sense, my spiritual instructors. But how little did they think of the seeds they were sowing in my youthful mind! All they saw was a restless little animal, sometimes on the seat, sometimes off, sometimes looking in the book in which his mamma had pointed out his place, and sometimes gazing on vacancy, or exciting the frowns of his father by telegraphing with his lips to the children of the charity school; and yet, the faithful discharge of their Sabbath duty was affecting even him!

But, if these were my examples, Tom Exton was my caution. "Mamma," I once said, "why doesn't Tom Exton come to church?"

"Tom Exton, my dear? Say, Mr. Exton!"

"Why, papa always says Tom Exton. I heard him say, 'Now, Tom, I can't bear this,' when he swore so wickedly to his horse at the end of the lane. But why doesn't he come to church? has anybody let him off coming? Oh dear, I do get so tired sometimes!" Of course, I was told no one could "let him off coming," that swearing was wicked, and not coming to church was wicked. From that day Tom Exton, one of those young sporting and reckless characters who attain to a fortune long before the years of discretion, was called "the wicked man" in our nursery—a touching reproach, if he had but heard it.

How are the wild fields planted? How is it that the plants of one unpeopled clime have found their way into another?—The winds and the waves, and the birds of the air, transport the seeds, and supply the place of human agency. This is not chance; it is all designed in the counsels of the Most High.

And, are these the only seeds? are there no seeds of a spiritual kind dropped here and there at His bidding, though by unconscious ministers of His will? Surely there are. And this should be our warning to persevere in one life-long course of childlike obedience, "doing as we are bid, and not asking why," but leaving the result to Almighty Wisdom.

But, shall we really be satisfied with this casual and incidental instruction, and with apparently so little serious attention to a child's highest interest?—Let us consider the question. Honesty, and truth, and benevolence are also a part of a child's highest interest; yet we all consent to inculcate these virtues only incidentally, with a word here and an admonition there, as occasion suggests. And why attempt to teach a child's duty to his God on any other system? Theology or Bible lessons are one thing, but piety is another. The one is the mere filling of the head, the other is a principle of the heart. The one is derived from the father, or the masters he deputes; the other—a child's religion, his spiritual sense—in a great majority of cases is cultivated by the mother alone.

Such, at least, was my case. To me, Religion was always more lovely and attractive as seen in woman. There was ever an austerity and roughness in the character of man. Whenever I dreamt dreams, or saw visions of angels—and who has not?—they all appeared in the female form. My mother was all sym-

pathy and loving-kindness. We could go to her with a confession, but with my father we never dreamt of such a thing. It is seldom a father serves as father confessor; indeed, a *father* confessor I never could conceive. How the Roman Catholic priest succeeds with the gentlemen I cannot imagine. With me, he would act like a non-conductor; though, a *mother* confessor seems natural enough.

Oh, there are moments when woman is far mightier than her lord! The steel-clad knight may dash through bars, and burst the castle gates; but, for access to the secrets of the stony heart, or to bend the iron will, "Commend me to the Queen of Beauty's power."—See how the rude and icy avalanche defies the wintry blast, but melts and yields before the solar rays!

Such is the power and responsibility of the Christian mother. But let me not deceive you, ladies. This Christian influence has no kind of connexion with talking religion, or keeping up religious appearances as an example to your children. It depends on *being* religious. I have known more than one thoughtless couple, without an instinct of devotion in either of them, introduce family prayers and formal observances expressly as an example and as a duty, because their children were leaving the nursery. Poor, pitiable, ignorant souls!—though better this than nothing. Little hope, indeed, is there of piety being instilled by such a mother as this! How little do you know of the infant mind!

Speech is but one vehicle of knowledge. There is also the language of the eye, and the hieroglyphics of every feature, which your babe can decipher. Did you never see the angry scowl of an evil-minded nurse passing as a dark cloud over the infant's brow?—Even so is there a mysterious law of sympathy that brings the feelings of the infant into harmony and unison with the mother's heart.

By the time we leave the nursery the good seed is sown, and commonly the process is this,—the mother plants the seed in infancy, care and affliction water and revive it in later years, and God gives the increase.

But I must confine myself to such parts of my life and adventures as will exemplify my preparation for the Church. And it is not less a training and preparation, because man thinks little of the end to which such means conduce. God ruleth over all; and all the selfish interests of man,—all the petty streams of rivalry and ambition, of money-making and self-pleasing in every shape—ay, and even malice, envy, and the worst of passions,—all, all are instruments in His hands,—all find their dark and troubled waters diverted to His high purposes,—all help to turn the mighty machinery of the world that He hath created. We can even

imagine the worst of feelings turned to the best account, and man's fury and passion, like "the wind and the storm, fulfilling His word."

The reason I am so particular about my nursery education is that there are hundreds of nurseries much like ours, where the Curates, Rectors, and Bishops of from twenty to fifty years hence, are trotting about in pinafores at this very time; and I am here following the fortunes of my brethren from the cradle to the grave. It is well that people should see us as we are; for the less they form unreasonable expectations, the less they will cry out when they happen to discover that we are only something better than themselves.

At nine years of age, I was sent to the Boltley Grammar-school, my mother having divers and sundry scruples lest I should hear bad words and see wicked practices. Little did she know the evil lessons that I had ample opportunity of learning at home. As I had few playfellows, the vulgar talk of the maids in-doors and the men about the farm formed the staple commodity of my pastimes.

Our men-servants and our maid-servants too had, in all probability, been reared in a cottage, with that abomination—for which every rich proprietor deserves to be indicted by the Society for the Suppression of Vice—one sleeping-room for both young and old. Of course, there is a prudery of tone and an assumed propriety of conduct, which it is as much part of a servant's business to acquire as dusting or ironing, and not much more a part of their natural character; and this propriety they all contrived to affect in my mother's presence, relapsing at once into their own native coarseness the moment the nursery-door was closed.

"Rural simplicity" and "village innocence" are pretty poetical terms. And the "purity of Home Education" is a fallacy of the same kind. If mothers lived, or could live in their nursery, or if they could always afford nursery-governesses of the habits of ladies to supply their place, the last of these terms might have some little meaning. But "rural innocence" commonly means "vice innocent of disguise." The rural deity has changed his pipe of modern days for one that breathes not melody, but tobacco; but all the grosser vices of his Arcadian majesty remain as rife and as pestilent as of old. Yet this was the sphere—so chaste and so chastening, as seen at the distance or on its brighter side—to which the piety of good Aunt Charlotte—could her consols have afforded a tutor, good, bad, or indifferent—would undoubtedly have committed "that giddy boy," in order properly *to prepare him for the Church.*

But, God ruleth over all. The yearnings of the warmest hearts —the earnest prayers of the most anxious parents—are often in very mercy denied. The husbandman would like to command showers upon this field and sunshine upon that, as confidently as if he knew all the mysteries of creative power. The parent would be equally anxious to rear and to cultivate his own children in his own way. This temper he would encourage by the sunshine of happy days; that temper he would correct by some less genial season. While most parents would agree in avoiding every temptation—thus teaching to swim in shallow water, and deferring the first possibility of sinking to that ocean of life in which so many are ready to keep us down, and so few are the friendly hands to bear us up.

Next to a mole, the blindest animal in creation is a parent. Blind, because affection is a delusive medium. Blind, because he identifies himself with his child, and is subject to all the delusions of self-love. But the child is anything but blind to the parent's faults. No one knows so little of the weakness of the child's character as his own father; no one knows so much of the weakness of the father's character as his own son. This is a fact admitted by every man in his neighbour's case—though, of course, "contrary to the hypothesis" that it should be admitted in his own. It seems, therefore, really providential, that the education of youths intended for the ministry should be so generally conducted far from the supposed pure sphere of home, and far from parental blindness. It seems providentially intended that boys, like birds and rabbits, should soon be scattered from the parent's nest and the parent's wing.

Accordingly, it was time I swam in deeper and more troubled waters: and, behold a trembling little urchin at eight o'clock on a cold morning in January, with his back to the wall at one end of the school, and his eye nervously directed to a green-baize door at the other, through which the master was momentarily expected, with as much horror as a Royal Bengal Tiger escaping from a menagerie.

Enters a bald-headed man in a gown—walks straight down the room—catches sight of "new boy"—approaches within goring or tossing distance—fixes both his eyes like horns to pierce him through, and says,—

"Boy, what's your name?"

New Boy (almost in a whisper): "Henry Austin, sir."

Master (in sharpest and most impatient key): "What d'ye call y'self?—Speak out!—What ye afraid of?—Well, I knew

you were coming; but how should I know which was Austin or which was Jones?"

The old man had never heard of nerves, not even nerves olfactory: for, I have not forgotten that when in later years we had waxed bolder, and so far carried the war into the enemy's country as to rub his desk with assafœtida, the way the old man tried—though he tried at last in vain—to ignore the infliction was, to our sensitive nostrils, truly wonderful.

I cannot dwell long on my school days, though the seven years at Boltley were really what school days ought to be—a life in miniature, a fair sample and one complete pattern cut off from the gradually unfolding roll of this life's varied tapestry. The question is, How far is such school life a preparation for the Church? what religion did they teach us? what serious advice? and so forth.—All I remember is "school prayers" and church on Sundays, and on Mondays Greek Testament and Watts's Scripture History; which last system of serving up holy things minced up into half-and-half questions and answers is the most execrable ever invented. Why not read and catechise upon the pure Word of God chapter by chapter as it is?

However, old Griskin succeeded to the bad books and prejudices, just as he succeeded to the desks and forms, of Boltley Grammar-school; and though this was all the religious instruction we had, except now and then a lecture when anything very flagitious had been committed, still we were made responsible for as many talents as was usual then, or, as I believe, now. We lived strictly under the "Law." Whether this state of discipline, this "law, was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ"—whether an inexorable system teaching obedience, order, industry, self-denial, and "bringing into captivity every thought," while every day of our lives God's word sounded in our ears—"whether they would hear or whether they would forbear"—whether this is a bad preparation—I leave all thoughtful persons maturely to weigh and to consider. At the same time they should take boys' nature duly into their calculation.

My own opinion is that the system, as a system, you can hardly mend, though systems at best are like the dry bones in the valley of Ezekiel, and we want—yes, my reader will suggest that we want—an Arnold to breathe on them to make "these dry bones live." But with all reverence for one who has done so much to elevate the office of the educator to that dignity and respect which it challenges as the noblest science, I fear that most exaggerated notions are formed of Arnold's success in Rugby School.

That there was a *vivida vis animi*—an intensity and truthfulness in that distinguished man, and that, meeting here and there with a congenial spirit, he lit up a kindred fire in the youthful heart, and that the same high principle may pass from father to son, as God shows His mercy unto thousands (of generations) of them that love Him, by the increase He hath attached to all good seeds,—this I believe, and this is Dr. Arnold's highest praise. Still, both Mr. Stanley and "Tom Brown" bear witness that there were many boys indeed beyond Arnold's power to influence. At Oxford I saw many of his pupils, "clean beasts by twos," but "unclean beasts by sevens," and strongly do I suspect that nineteen out of twenty of the Rugbeans had spiritual advantages no higher than we possessed under old Griskin. The said old Griskin personified the harshness of the Law, and I think it a happy circumstance that he left Scripture to speak for itself, and rarely went out of his way to inculcate the sanctions of the Gospel. Certainly, a man of ardent piety must have done so; but old Griskin was Griskin still, and no one else. There are certain incompatible offices in this life. Such are those offices which require the human porcupine to carry his quills alternately up and down, without any allowance for the habits of the animal.

A hundred unruly boys and nearly as many unreasonable parents made the "natural man" stand on the defensive, both in school and out, from the beginning of the half-year to the end. The "spiritual man" could not, therefore, very suddenly appear. Old Griskin's march through life was like that of Hannibal making his way by vinegar; pardon, I pray, the infirmities of nature, if the milk of human kindness was somewhat sour.

On this point I dwell, because the spiritual advantages of the young are commonly measured by a very delusive and a very chimerical standard. It seems desirable to show what means to ends spiritual are practicable in schools. The "pastor" and the "master" are offices rarely compatible in any high degree. Even the father who teaches his own sons merges the softer character in the more severe, and often chills their affections for life. From the same fountain we cannot draw waters both bitter and sweet; and the magistrate who deals whippings and imprisonments on week-days can hardly preach persuasively on Sundays. I say, therefore, as regards moral and religious education, the mothers make the boys and the boys make the school. It is quite homœopathically, of course, that one solitary master perched high and dry can operate on the moral constitutions of a

hundred boys: as well expect strong beef tea because a solitary cow has tumbled into the Thames.

Still we learnt much at Boltley Grammar-school, however indirectly, of great value in the ministry. We learn to know ourselves, not measuring ourselves, as in private education, by our own standard. As to the roughs of school life, they served like the "pelting of the pitiless storm" to poor King Lear. "These are no flatterers, but feelingly remind us what we are." We learnt also to know each other. Thus we cultivated common sense, making our sense a common measure and learning to be in harmony with those around us. Many a man will start at these words, and wonder he could have been so long blind to the influences which made him what he is; like the Gentleman in Molière, who talked prose forty years without knowing it. Soft showers and sunshine are soon regarded as blessings, but it is less easy to perceive that frost and snow are blessings too, and less easy still to understand that a boy's nature may lie fallow sometimes, without dibbling and model-farming all the year.

So far, then, I served a seven-years' apprenticeship to practical philosophy while at school. I left seven years older in character as in years. I had been either whipped by old Griskin or kicked by the boys for each denomination of offence at all likely to be committed with more serious consequences in after life. One flogging I remember imprinted on me, in cherry-coloured hieroglyphics, not to shuffle or prevaricate, while old Griskin came out with his favourite maxim, "Almost the truth is the most artful lie you can tell, boy;" and sundry blows and kicks taught various lessons in minor ethics; and one of the most useful of all was this:—

> "They who in quarrels interpose,
> Must often wipe a bloody nose."

These are the points on which I dwell more than on the Latin and the Greek, though my progress did honour to my teacher. Yet not one parent in a hundred gives a thought to this training of the mind—this forming of the manners and the man. I believe that if poor old Griskin could have made his last school report by quoting with all reverence these holy words, He has "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man,"—I say I do in my heart believe, that this old Griskin would have gone out sighing, if he could have shown no more tangible return for my schooling than this. Still, my Latin and Greek have been replaced, my sums rubbed out, and my intel-

lectual artillery discharged and reloaded again and again, while my early habits and experience remain the same. I went to school, as the square peg to the round hole: and, by the time I left, I had found my place and bearings, and had learnt to move among my fellow-men with less and less of that friction which incongruous feelings excite.

A large school is a little world. While climbing in seven years from the bottom form to the top, I had passed, as it were, from youth to age. I had rectified my illicit spirits, and clarified my judgment of men and manners. I learnt, while walking through the crowd of life, neither to run against any one, nor to let any one run against me. I had been taught to feel my way with my neighbour's prejudices—to watch the cloud on an angry brow—to say enough and not too much, and to treat kindly and tenderly those little failings and conceits which make up the compound Man.

Charles Lamb speaks of men of imperfect sympathies. He means men who work not glibly and smoothly in the machinery of life, more like the grit than the oil in the social wheel—men of repulsive attraction—men in the hardware line—men who in conversation hold you to your word without the grace to fit their answer to your meaning. Of all the secrets of worldly success, or hourly happiness for ourselves or others, there is nothing like perfect sympathies—that good Samaritan feeling which pours oil into your wounds, gets off that you may ride, provides for you for the day, and even yearns into the morrow. "There 's such divinity doth hedge a king"—there 's such a balmy influence sheds its halo around a really sympathetic soul. Some musical buildings deliver us of our voice; some sympathetic people of our thoughts and feelings, their heart-strings being in perfect tone and unison with our own. This is a character invaluable to the minister as to the man, and for its first growth and culture there is no place like a public school exclusively of gentlemen. So, even if I had learnt "small Latin and less Greek," I still should have had cause to be grateful for seven years at Boltley.

But to continue the illustration of the square peg, as another means of making me *teres atque rotundus*—of course Horace means making the square peg round—I passed, as to another workroom in the machinery of life, to a new course of friction, or sphere of probation in the University of Oxford, already sketched in another work.*

"Oh, nice preparation for the ministry! Oh, pure and chaste

* "Recollections of College Days." Longman & Co.

sphere certainly! Do you expect us to forget the follies and the vanities for which the name of Oxonian and of Cantab has been for years a by-word?"

A sphere is pure by comparison, and pure with some allowance for the fact that, in this world, whatever the school, the college, or the community, "there is no man that doeth good; no, not one."

But, deny it who can, if there is one class of society in England of more social purity and rectitude of feeling than another, that class comprises the mothers, God bless them! whom Oxonians, amidst all their follies, instinctively revere. Secondly, if these good mothers have one son more promising than another, that son is the one selected for a University education; and, thirdly, if there is one city in England in which, pre-eminently, things of good report are fostered and things of evil report are counteracted, that city bears the time-honoured name of Oxford.

In other towns, men live to improve their fortunes; in Oxford, to improve themselves. In other towns, men are judged by their money; at Oxford, by their manners and their minds.

But, how far did those University studies bear upon the ministry?—Far more directly than we commonly suppose.

Imagine a fine summer's afternoon, every window in the college open, every room fresh with the verdure of those ancestral elms, and thrilling with the songs of the birds, so joyous in our college garden. Voices resound, and many feet grate upon the gravel, as some young men are hurrying to the boats, and some to Bullingdon and the cricket-grounds. Still, at this window, and at that, the rustling of paper or the dim outline of one deep in thought, betrays that some are able to defy the charms of nature and the pent-up energies of youth. What are they doing to persevere alone?—Ostensibly, they are mastering Thucydides or Aristotle, but in reality they are mastering themselves! Pleasure has struggled hard with duty, and duty has won!

But what of Aristotle? What of Thucydides? How does such learning qualify for the ministry?

The question lies simply between this and some other kind of study, while youths are growing into men.

Now, seeing that Theology receives its full share of attention, what can be more valuable than to study Man—human thought and human character—and to study Man under such varieties of age and clime as shall distinguish between individual peculiarities or the caprices of fashion, and the creature Man as his Creator made him? Some persons think Geology a preferable study; some would suggest Astronomy, or Chemistry, or any other science.

I am myself much interested in the various strata of the three series, nor do I look with indifference on the starry firmament above, or on organic substances below; but, as a choice in point of usefulness for a clergyman's life, I must maintain that "the proper study of mankind is man." The *nil admirari*—that knowledge of human nature which makes us surprised or disappointed at nothing, which enables us to identify every fault and foible, every virtue, vice, or passion, in many a scene and character in this world's drama, in an almost unbroken series, from Adam to the present day—this knowledge for the ministry claims precedence over all other sciences; and such are the chief studies of Oxford.

Some men examine curiously a Saxon coffin, or a mummy, or armour worn on Flodden Field, and boast a great discovery in inferring that the stature of man is at least as large as in former ages. With no less triumph do men pronounce on the structure of fish, or plants, or fossils, anterior to the flood. And, is it less curious, less a triumph, to penetrate and to analyse the thoughts and the feelings of past generations; to ascertain that for thousands of years the heart of man has throbbed with the same emotions, that envy and other passions have been the same torture to the breast; and that Conscience, in the days of Æschylus as in ours, has shaken the same avenging scourge over the guilty head?

I am almost afraid to consider what I have advanced. My praises of things as they are, seem indeed too unqualified to be true. I feel like De Lolme, who knew comparatively little of the beauties of the English Constitution before they unfolded themselves in the course of his work. The training I have described is a fair picture of an early stage in our Church system. This training has improved, is improving, and will yet more improve.

The improvement to be expected must depend not on better measures, but better MOTHERS. Wiser mothers must people our schools, and our schools our colleges, with better youths. The mothers of England supply the material on which all pastors and masters have to work. We are often told, the clergy are not exclusively the Church. Would that the laity would urge this doctrine further still, and admit that the clergy are not only *from* them, but *of* them, deriving all their infirmities from the same temptations. Then, they who complain of the imperfections of flesh and blood in the ministry, would see that the real question is, not whether the clergy of England are as passionless as all good men would desire; but whether, as compared with the laity from whom they are selected, their superiority as a body is not as decided as the most sanguine could possibly expect.

CHAPTER II.

THE COLLEGE FRIENDS — OXFORD PARTIES — A PARSON'S LIFE, IN IDEA AND IN REALITY — THE LONDON CURATE — CITY ARABS.

I PASSED my final examination, and took my B.A. degree, early in the month of June, 18—. No one but a graduate, in the first flutter of his ample gown, can tell how great was the relief. Mercifully delivered from a four-years' incubus, I felt like a young Master Atlas, with the world just dropped off his shoulders. Brereton of Merton, and I, had read together some six hours out of every day, allowing a half-hour's interval for a hasty dinner, during the whole of the last month; so, when once clear of the Schools, we were inseparables — *strenua exercet inertia* — doing nothing with all our might and main. It was by that time allowable to unbend. We could then be idle with a clear conscience; or, as Brereton said, "out of principle;" an expression which generally means, because men like it. Oh! how we lounged in each other's easy chairs those sunny mornings, and then sauntered to the boats, and floated—just paddling—down the Cherwell. We once declared we would try to catch some chub, quite out of sympathy, because chub are the laziest fish in existence; and, one day, we lay for a while in the deep grass while he backed one fleecy cloud for sixpence, and I another, to complete a supposed piece of aërial scene-shifting first. However, idleness continued ceases to be rest: and we soon exclaimed that our ἰσχυαι wanted a τελος, by which terms Aristotle implied that the way of the world is like seeing the pictures at Blenheim. Nature, like the old housekeeper, whispers, "Keep moving, gentlemen; keep moving;" and, almost before we have digested one object in the Great Exhibition of this world, man must pass on to something else. So we soon began again to read, to talk, and to discuss. I cannot certainly remember all we talked of, but a few observations by Brereton, spoken at the time when the Oxford Tract party was

first formed, has always appeared to me to have so much truth in it, that I venture to give the following sketch of our youthful dialogue:—

Austin. "Let me ask, Brereton, what do you think of this Tract party? Only consider the style of men who are running after this new crotchet; not merely men of a Pharisaic sort of piety, but think of the set of Beresford, and Ayton, ay, and Glover of Oriel, too—all heart and hand in the cause."

Brereton. "Why, I'll tell you what I have been thinking; you remember what we once agreed about, 'The Signs of the Times,' when talking over the life of John Wesley?".

Austin. "True. We were a little philosophical and comprehensive in our views just then; and I remember this observation especially, that there was a daily increasing number of rising men, who, yearning for a more genial sphere for their religious feelings, were only kept down by certain incidents of Methodism that jarred upon their tastes, and you said these very words, which really seem prophetic: "Depend upon it, Austin, if some one were to originate a sect of Genteel Dissenters, it would spread from the Land's End to John o' Groats in a very short time.'"

Brereton. "But you do not mean to say that the restoration of ancient discipline, and all the other '*notes*' of this party, are a sham?'"

Austin. "Neither do I mean to say that in the days of Lord George Gordon's row, all zeal for Protestantism was a sham; but I do mean, that not one in a hundred of that deluded mob at all understood what he was shouting for. No. This is true of all great parties. There is a reality as a nucleus, but by far the greater and the noisier part are but as leaves and husk. As to understanding and acting from conviction of the truth of their opinions, why, there's Hemsworth, and a dozen like him, who made sad work of the Thirty-nine Articles in the schools, but still are they so positive about the history of the Church, that Winton, coolly taking his cigar out of his mouth, said, as one unanswerable argument to a whole long Anglo-Catholic theory, hot from the Common Room of Oriel,—'Come, this is too good a joke, my dear fellow; the stream of your history theological, to my certain knowledge, runs no deeper than one of Vincent's Cram books!' That is true enough, and true of all great parties, whether in Church or State. Consider the case of the Roman Catholic question, or the Reform Bill, and their respective parties; how few could vindicate their opinions by sound argument! No, the social waters were surging and swelling; men amused themselves, as it

were, by wrangling on the beach, while the resistless tide was driving in billow after billow, till it swept them, arguments and all, clear away."

Brereton. "And you believe there is the same resistless power in operation now?"

Austin. "No doubt of it. An efficient cause is one thing—a formal cause—or a mere occasion, is another. The Oriel men have framed the mill, but is any man so foolish as not to see that their subtle disquisitions are of small account, indeed, compared with the daily increasing motive power?"

Brereton. "You mean, that the Oriel crotchets are as the mill, and the growing piety and seriousness we observe in Oxford men is the real stream to turn it. But, shall we say any other mill would do as well—any other *ism?*"

Austin. "No. Your machinery must always bear some relation to the power that moves it. This stream would not turn a Low-Church mill, nor an ungenteel mill. These men feel order and discipline an attraction. Besides, how charming must it be to find so good a use for all the Greek and Latin they have been acquiring—to have something in unison with all their tastes and habits—the growth of sixteen terms amidst the ancient associations of our grey, time-honoured towers!"

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These were free and happy hours, "the feast of reason and the flow of soul," that I spent with old Brereton. Yes, *old;* because we had grown up from boyhood together—*old*, because our friendship seemed of mature and solid growth. It was not that we were in tastes so much alike; rather that his mind was the complement of mine, and mine of his. We never jarred on each other's feelings. Each could meet an idea half way, and carry on a kind of short-hand conversation. He once said to me, "You are the flint to my steel—the spark flies out between us. I like a man to obstetricise my ideas, not to strangle them in their birth."

Still, though we felt so well suited to live together, to be nearest neighbours, and to fraternise, as "Cheerible brothers" throughout life; yet, in a few days, Commemoration had, as usual, emptied the cricket-grounds and the boat-houses into Blenheim Park or the pic-nic retreats of Newnham, and term was over. It had been duly honoured with college breakfasts and luncheons, when all the college gardens are gay, and all hearts are fluttering with those indescribable sensations which ladies, and even the very mention of them, ever will scatter among "tinder-hearted" men: but now all had passed away. My friend's home was in

Guernsey, and mine in L——; so our separation placed us wide as the poles asunder. This is an impressive feature in all college friendships; that two congenial spirits are brought from north and south, to live together till blended into one, and then inexorably torn away like Siberian exiles, to look on past pleasures as a dream.

But Oxford serves like a great railway station, to give us short glimpses of each other in the journey of life, with just as little prospect of our travelling far together, however fond of each other's company. Brereton and I never met for nine long years; when, on one muddy, sloppy day, I met him in London, with a wife, two boys, a wet umbrella, and far more "shopping" in his hands than he ever thought to carry. He glanced at me helplessly, and said,—

"'Quantum mutatus ab illo.'

What an altered man am I from that Brereton of Merton, who once, with Thucydides and Aristotle, chops and pancakes, tried the digestion, both of mind and body, as you remember, in Randall's lodgings! Come and see me and recall old times to-morrow, and let us have one talk more before I die."

Next day I went to visit him, scarcely a stone's throw from the Surrey end of London Bridge.

"Ah!" said he, "how little do men know of the life that is before them when they enter the Church! Red-coats and ball-rooms act with gentlemen like the drum and the ribbons with the chaw-bacons, to tempt thoughtless young fellows into the army. A comfortable parsonage on week-days, and a rapidly improving congregation on Sundays, is the vision which draws many a man, equally under a delusion, into the Church. Now look at me. My house is below the level of the Thames; the streets are reeking with malaria; those geraniums look pale and dowdy, and my wife and children much the same. My wife and her flowers were both natives of the same clear atmosphere, and each sympathises in the other's change. Poor Sally! you know you always suspected there was an attraction in the latitude of Henley, and now you have seen the lady herself. She, poor thing, pictured to herself, as a parson's wife, a model parish, with every cottage all honeysuckles and beehives, and the neatest mobcaps and cleanest aprons curtseying as the lady of the vicarage passed up and down some pretty lane; and here she cannot move for carts and drays that block up the streets, and the squalid stream from the gin-palace and the alleys. Why, they stare at her as the creation of some

purer sphere! Few, indeed, are the objects her charity can relieve; the dens of misery are too repulsive."

"But do you make any sensible progress in such a parish?"

"As to progress, the Almighty only knows how long His own good seeds are ordained to lie before they show the tender blade; but, as to sensible progress, there is little indeed. You remember we used to talk at college of doctrines and style of preaching, of Paul or of Apollos, of Melvill or of Chalmers. So, young soldiers think of military tactics on the field of battle as if it were all like a game of chess: when, after all, it is the regularity of the supplies and the excellence of the commissariat that give effect to all the rest. So it is in my parish. We want the bread that perisheth as a means to the bread of life. Our Saviour wrought the miracles of the loaves *after* preaching to the thousands; but here, we want such a miracle first. Our Lord could on one occasion do no miracle 'because of their unbelief:' we can do little because of their hungry inattention, tracing your hand to your breeches pocket. If a man were made of broken victuals and old clothes, if he were fountains of caudle and rivers of soup, as Juvenal says, '*epotaque flumina Medo*,' I believe the poor souls would drink him dry.

"Are there many Dissenters in your parish?" I inquired.

"Dissenters! Would there were!" said Brereton, emphatically. "But you must not misunderstand me; though I could almost wish we had every *ism* under the sun. No *ism* is half as bad as Heathenism. Here we have worse than that; we have Atheism!—not merely an ignorance, but a negation of God! My experience no doubt coincides with yours, and I know my views used to be much the same; but, old notions of orthodox practices and the dignity of the Church-of-England clergy, are put to a hard strain in an overgrown city parish—though parish it is not, the parochial system has little application. It is a wilderness of houses, and the Surrey side of London Bridge wants the same sort of Mission as the interior of Africa or Chinese Tartary. It used to be very Low Church to recognise the City Mission; very Low Church to have a feeling soul in the pulpit; still more Low Church to preach in a cottage, and No Church at all to be seen with twenty men without coats, and as many women without bonnets, gathered round you to hear words, hot from the heart, at the further end of a blind alley. You should see some of the Puseyites, as people call them."

"What, are they not High Church enough?"

"Yes, in theory; but nature is too strong for them. Truth

is too strong when brought to the test of action and effect. They may be blind as kittens for nine days or so, but they cannot help opening their eyes when once they come here. Wilson of Oriel is here, and a brother of Kirkham of University. These two men have, indeed, most enviable working qualities; and, instead of that kind of fasting and self-denial which used to consist in eating eggs and keeping out of the Common Room, one of them almost limits himself to boiled meat, that he may give the broth to the sick poor; and the way they persevere in reading and praying amidst our crowded garrets is really a mercy for a man who lacks enthusiasm, like me, to witness. I do declare to you, that the example of Wilson and Kirkham has often stimulated me to visit one or two poor souls more, when I thought I had done enough for the day and was going home!"

"And the difference of your doctrine and theirs you think is quite a vanishing quantity?"

"It makes as little difference with our present 'pupils' as the difference between the Aristotelian and Platonic theories. Were you here, you would say there was a distinction between us without a difference. I often tell them that they are 'Oxford Tract,' the part of tract having worn out by rubbing against human nature. If they would only learn to Protestantise their collars, and to un-Romanise their coats, they would obviate a world of prejudice. Every man can distinguish your coat, though very few can distinguish your doctrines; just as the vulgar know a Jew, never by his tenets, but always by his beard."

He continued after a while:—

"But, really, dress is something: a distinguishing costume does show them wise in their generation, however foolish to copy the garb of Rome. Dress marks a party, and a party is no slight means of gathering and of multiplying strength. A party forms a standard to rally round; and more than that, it adds a powerful secondary motive and a useful stimulus to counteract the leaden apathy of man, and to quicken 'the body of this death,' with which we are doomed to struggle on! The soldiers of the cross, like other soldiers, warm with each other's fire, when they would not single-handed rush into the breach. If men were all soul and no body—if we were each a pure abstraction, without savouring in the least of that grosser nature which, says Lucretius, '*Mortales hebetat visus*'—dulls the edge of our mortal vision—why then, the mind might possibly energise without a party, and without any of those stepping-stones by which we pass and mark our progress from one stage to another; but, constituted as we frail mortals are,

we do find in a party a degree of comfort and encouragement which it is not wise to decry. Every day we see more and more of the truth of what we predicted years ago.

"We said that the Puseyism would wear off and the piety would remain. What we said of the genteel *ism* is also true. Genuine religion used to involve a kind of martyrdom, more dreaded by some persons than fire and sword; namely, a loss of caste in society and a necessity of sympathising with an inferior order of people. I cannot at this moment think, without impatience, of the ill-bred habits and intrusiveness which used to annoy me in associating with a certain religious party some years since; but now, persons of taste and refinement form a religious circle of their own: that piety which has come in as a flood, will not be pure at first, and very likely it will overflow its banks, and destroy ancient landmarks; but still, whether the High-Church ladies of Belgravia work monograms, or the Low-Church ladies of Clapham crochet slippers, the tendency to forget the spiritual end in the temporal means, and to worship the creature instead of the Creator, is much the same. Still, we must never forget that the encouragement to formality so easy to draw from the Tractarian system is very dangerous. However, one great result of this movement is, that the wealth and influence of the most powerful party in London is gradually drawn to Ragged Schools, and Model Lodging-houses, and active Christian charity,—and this is no slight counterpoise to Tractarian errors.

"It seems wise and reasonable to consider that every party which succeeds, succeeds by virtue of something founded in truth and human nature. 'There's a soul of goodness' even in 'things evil,' and it is our duty to 'distil it out.' I confess it was from Kirkham and Wilson that I first learnt the art of self-multiplication,—to set men of all classes to work with us and for us.

"But the secret of that power over others consists not in talking but in doing. It is our own personal energy which inspires. It consists not in 'go,' but 'come.' It has nothing to do with making a comfortable tea-party, with a week's invitation, to consider the propriety of taking measures to form a committee to perform diurnal revolutions on their own axis, and do nothing after all. But Kirkham stops for no preliminary formalities whatever,—on he goes, waits for no one, but does his own duty vigorously. It is not his fault, he says, that there is work for nineteen others. No; there is all the more reason that he should do his twentieth part the better.

"The consequence is, many are fired by his enthusiasm and

follow in his train. One week a grocer's apprentice offers to work an hour; another week adds a tailor or a saddler, and they ere long are joined by others—a wife, sister, or a friend—till Kirkham realises the old poetic wish of a hundred hands and a hundred tongues, all ministering to necessities, and teaching the ignorant at the same time."

"But do you find the Tractarians universally men of this character?"

"Far indeed from universally. Wolves in sheep's clothing will, to the end of time, follow with the honest and sincere, and play Judas to every sect. If the Low-Church party is occasionally disgraced with mere adventurers and fortune-hunters, the Tractarian garb and monumental apathy are also caricatured by a class of men who, but for a family living, would never have been ordained at all.

"I could mention a man who, with chants, and introits, and decorations, has made himself more notorious, and done more to depreciate the Church of England in the eyes of all sober-minded men, than any pervert at the present day; yet that man has so little of the real spirit of his party, that he is known as a fashionable *bon vivant*, and actually joins parties in Lent. Indeed, as far as I have observed, no party is more likely than the Tractarian to be compromised by men who take the name rather as a matter of taste than of piety, and as a mere cloak for their ignorance, or food for their vanity. I have learnt lately to be careful how I judge of men by the names of their party.

"At one time, whoever was simply in earnest was called Low Church, or Evangelical; and now, any man who is an honest Churchman is likely to be called Tractarian. Give me a man with his heart in the cause, and with that strong and stirring faith within him, which will alone support him day after day in our crowded lodging-houses, and he is the Churchman for me. In so saying, I am not indifferent to doctrines. I only mean, that where you meet a man heart and soul in the Gospel tidings amidst the wilds of Arabia—and no small part of England is dark—orthodox practice takes precedence of orthodox opinions.

"Orthodox practice?"

"Yes, orthodox practice is the word. A good minister is a living epistle—a walking sermon, read and marked by all men, neither can he preach with his lips more emphatically than by his life. Remember the Ordination vow. Old Dr. Edwards, who christened me, catechised me for confirmation, and gave me my *Si quis* and testimonials for Holy Orders, uttered these memorable

words, which I never shall forget:—'Remember, my very dear young friend, there is no place Satan is more actively at work than in the ministry. Envy and detraction are his weapons. Half you hear about this clergyman's views and the other's—half the pretended zeal about errors Calvinistic, Evangelical, and Tractarian—of doctrines, of faith without works, and works without faith, is idleness, envy, malice, and all uncharitableness, and nothing else.'

"'Take my advice—judge your brethren not by their supposed opinions, but by their manifest energy and industry, and the Christian purity and rectitude of their lives and conversations. Here is your Ordination vow; frame it, and put it up in your study, or let it stare you in the face (as mine does) when you wake in the morning. Let this be to you as the handwriting on the wall, and 'graven as with a pen of iron on a rock for ever;'' and then he pronounced, with much feeling and unction, that powerful exhortation of the Bishop: 'If it shall happen that the Church, or any member thereof, take any hurt or hindrance through your negligence, ye know the greatness of the fault and the horrible punishment that will ensue.' Now, what I call orthodox practice is acting up to this vow; and believe me, that Aristotle's dictum, that moral practice teaches moral science, or, in other words, that 'if any man will do His will he shall know of His doctrine,'—that this is proved again and again in a good pastor's life; for God's Word is as naturally adapted to man's heart as the sun's rays to the human eye. And when in a parish there is no one to make us cling to our fallacies by vexatious argument and opposition, nature and truth usurp their might and majesty, and so by experience errors wear away; albeit, the poor minister is still called Calvinistic or Tractarian, though nothing but pure and fervent piety remains."

The topic with Brereton now changed, and I adverted to the misery and poverty of the great metropolis, with which he had to contend on the Surrey side of the river, and he replied thoughtfully:—

"A dead-house is very much wanted among our people. This is one of the most urgent wants we have."

"A dead-house! What, are you chaplain to the hospital?"

"No, no; but we want a dead-house to relieve any family living all in one room, as much as we want one to relieve the patients in an hospital ward. Why, what is the poor family to do for a week when one dies, and lies unburied, perhaps a week, in the month of August?"

This was indeed a new difficulty to me, so I said, "Living all in one room!—the case never occurred to me."

"Never occurred! It is frequent here, and a horrible violation of all proper feeling and decency results. An old French officer once told me that, after the battle of Haynau, he saw four soldiers in a cart playing at cards, and the dead body of a comrade who had died on the journey—so blunted were their feelings by familiarity with death and misery—formed the card-table! If we only follow out the probable accidents and emergencies of several days with a corpse in one room with the family, you will easily realise the possibility of what I once witnessed—some little children playing 'bo-peep' behind their mother's coffin!"

"Horrible!" I exclaimed.

"Horrible! yes; but true, too true. The scenes our City Mission have brought to light would surpass all fiction. What Mr. Melvill mentioned in a charity sermon is the most pregnant fact I ever heard. A poor man, who had seen better days—once a surgeon—was found in such extremity of want that he had torn a piece off his last shirt to dress his blister!"

After a while he continued,—

"We have now a new term, that recognises emphatically an evil too long ignored. I mean, 'The City Arabs.' This is one step towards realising the truth that a veritable heathen mission is as much wanted in the interior of London as in the interior of Africa. As to heathen ignorance, in London we have a darkness that may be felt—as to the gross and debasing habits of the brutes that perish, we have hovels and savages not surpassed in Timbuctoo—and as to poisonous malaria, I can show you veritable patches of Sierra Leone no further off than Spitalfields—and, as to hunger and thirst, I can say with Smollett, that a man without money may starve in Leadenhall Market as well as in the wilds of Arabia; while pure water is, to the weak and sickly, as inaccessible in some parts of London as in the sandy desert.

"Now, amidst all these evils, so exhausting to the body, so narcotic to the mind, and so debasing to the soul, sin becomes a physical necessity—a moral leprosy, beyond any ordinary human strength to resist. You must feed, and cleanse, and purify, and raise the poor creature from the condition of the swine before you can appeal to the feelings of the man. How can I teach or preach with effect to a dozen persons of different ages and sexes, amidst the festering filth of one small room—all too degraded and reckless with misery to care what happens to them in body or in soul? It is for this reason I hail the movement for model

lodging-houses and sanitary reform. 'This reform is indispensable for the Gospel, because it is the same thing as opening their eyes to read, their ears to hear, and their minds to understand.

"If in this assertion I appear to take a low view of the Gospel and the power of the ministry, I reply, that if I err, I err with Hooker; for he says, in his own judicious way, that as to food and raiment, 'Destitution in these is such an impediment as suffereth not the mind of man to admit any other care.' And again, 'True it is that the kingdom of God must be the first thing in our purposes and desires. But, inasmuch as a righteous life presupposeth life—inasmuch as to live virtuously is impossible except we live; therefore, the first impediment, which naturally we endeavour to remove, is penury and want of things without which we cannot live.'"

"And such miseries you actually are liable to encounter in your city visiting?"

"Indeed I am. I see misery beyond the power of words, and death in divers forms. But, believe me, it is not death, it is not sickness, it is not want, it is not any natural visitation you could name, that I most dread to encounter. The natural visitations of Providence all involve some secret balm and drops of comfort: there is rest in the silent grave: our dearest relatives, we feel, can die but once: and I have heard the most affectionate of mourners, turning from the last long look upon the lowered coffin, say, 'Never mind—there is nothing there—I can bear it all, for that grave has no victory.' But worst of all to witness are scenes of shame and of remorse, for it so happened that I once relieved Watson as chaplain of —— gaol for three months, and never shall I forget the piercing cry of one pale and almost bloodless woman when Douglas, the cashier of a north-country bank, was sentenced to transportation. It had been a true love-match between them, and he, an affectionate husband, was weak and over-fond. The wife was careless and brought him into debt. His goods were threatened with execution, and he, to spare her feelings and his own character, falsified an entry to the extent of 100*l.*, the exact amount of his quarter's salary, which he intended only to anticipate by a month.—Ah! to fathom the lowest depths of misery, you must witness man's self-inflicted tortures in racking brain and aching heart, which I saw then.

"Come, my good fellow—time is short—more of this when we meet to-morrow. If ever you get me into Newgate with you—you always were fond of a hanging story—I shall not be let

out again in a hurry. But as to a really pathetic tale, remember that I tell you the story of that widow whose husband I buried."

"I will not forget to remind you. But I can tell you that, as to widows, I have learnt of late to hold my sympathies a little better in hand. There was our squire's wife at my first parish, who kept me in a painfully melting mood for a whole week, and after all, it turned out to be only what they call 'a happy release.' Literally, at the end of ten months, old Davy, our clerk, came to me one morning and said, 'Please, sir, you are wanted. Our lady is coming after a license.'

"'A license!' I replied, astonished: 'a certificate of her husband's death you mean.'

"'No, sir, I do not,' said Davy; 'tis a license. And 'tis the captain who came so regularly for the shooting in the squire's lifetime; and they won't wait no longer to please any one, says my lady's maid.'"

"Good bye, good bye!"

CHAPTER III.

I LEAVE COLLEGE—THE OXFORD COACHMAN—WAYSIDE WISDOM—AFFECTING STORY OF JOHNNY WALTERS—OFF MY FATHER'S HANDS.

In one of the old novels—beyond all doubt the model of *The Caxtons*—that delightful work which shows how very superior in tone and feeling an author in his maturity may rise to the same author in his youth—the hero of the tale says, "But, to return to my history, for—I forgot—all this time I am not *born*." So, I must say, to return to my history in the Ministry, for, I forgot, all this time I am not Ordained!—I left myself standing at the door of the Angel, opposite Queen's College, Oxford, Brereton having started south in a nine-o'clock coach, and I booked for the north about ten.

Few old Oxonians can look up the High Street without emotion, to take a last long look at the end of their career. We feel we have passed from youth to age. One chapter of life—oh, how full of meaning and of significance!—seems ended; and, for better or for worse, the book is closed. Then a new generation is treading upon our heels: we wonder how sanguine and visionary they appear—for we can see their present and their future at a glance—and wake from our reverie to identify ourselves, as we were but ten or twelve terms since. The same hive, but new swarms of busy bees, is the idea which to my mind a distant view of Oxford always presents. A railway refreshment-room, as at Swindon or Wolverhampton, leaves the same impression. One minute all is still and motionless—then pours in an eager crowd of excited guests—a few minutes pass in hurry and confusion, and then one and all are whirled away, and the building remains as still and silent as before. I had felt what it was to have practised for the great match of the cricket season, and to have had my innings, and seen that event come off,—I had felt what it was

to have trained for the boat-races, and seen the last heart-stirring struggle over. And now the one great contest that gave occasion to all these little strifes was past; my college race was run; my innings over—"our side out," and "the other side going in!"

Edwards, the coachman, with his whip in his hand and a pink in his button-hole, sauntered quietly up while the coach was being loaded, and said to me, as he put his finger to his hat, "It is time I knew your luggage, sir; I have seen it pretty often. You've passed the right side the post—eh, sir? Mr. Mackeson told me that good news. So I must congratulate you, sir." —"Ned," turning to the porter, "keep a box-seat for Mr. Austin. You deserve it this term—don't ye, sir?"

Coachmen are not so communicative at first start—thinking of the way-bill and the work before them, and sometimes from habit when they have no way-bill to think of; but, after a while, our usual conversation began:—

"They've been down upon some of them this examination, haven't they, sir? Mr. Flower, I fancy, has tried to shave the corner a little too fine ——"

"Why, who told you, Edwards?"

"All right, sir. No tales out o' school. You needn't be afraid of committing yourself—I knew it before ever I spoke to you, sir—honour bright!"

"It seems to me, Edwards, you pick up information very fast."

"That's because they tell o' themselves very often, sir; a bird just plucked, and tender-like and sensitive, is sure to squeak. I know the ways of them, sir, as well as any one. Not that I am ever curious; but, when a box-seat has a heavy conscience, and every stage brings him nearer and nearer to the old gentleman who has had to pay and pay year after year, and pay for nothing, and when the news has gone down the road before him, he's sure to split upon himself. A gentleman outside one day told a story out o' one of your College-books—I didn't think there had been half as much sense in those books—about a young woman who had made some unpleasant discovery or other about her young man's ears, and not having anybody to tell it to, she went and dug a hole in the garden and told it there. That's life, sir, that is. I call that human nature all over. A box-seat talking quietly—and no outsiders behind to overhear—him I can get anything out of, about College, by the time we change horses at the Hare and Hounds on the hill; or, if not then, wait till he has had one half-pint of the Swan's ale, hot with a little gin in it,

and the story will all come out as smooth as can be—That's the way I know things, Mr. Austin."

If a fine and perfect specimen of the genus coachman were to be mummified or preserved for the British Museum, before the railways made the race, dodo-like, extinct, Samuel Edwards of the Rocket should have been the man. He was a man of better family and education than usual in those days, though there were always a few broken-down gentlemen on the road. But when, as he said, "the money came to be divided at the old man's death, I had sense enough to see that my gentility, like myself, could not live on air; so I put my pride in the hind boot, and worked the first coach I could hear of."

He soon continued:—

"Well sir, your youngest brother's growing tall. So, I suppose he must be attended to now, and will begin to tread you out of the family nest to try to peck a little on your own account—I suppose now the old gentleman will expect you to set about something *profitable?*"

I confess that this off-hand view of me and my position did for the first time make me realise the fact that the hour had come to provide for myself—and really, in gaining a *testamur*, I felt at the moment a little disappointment, as if I had gained a loss, and were launched on the ocean of life a little more suddenly than I had before considered.

"Yes," he repeated, "you'll now be about something that's some good to somebody."

"Why, you seem to have a low opinion of four years at the University, Edwards? Is there no use in that?"

"I call that lying fallow—being out at grass; and, like horses out at grass, you are all the while eating your heads off. I often wonder the governors are not more in a hurry for some return for their outlay. But I am aware that with professions you cannot begin very young. So in this way we must allow six-year-old colts. Parsons are made full young as it is: as to lawyers and doctors, the customers take care of that. Clients and patients will not trust practitioners till they are something more than boys."

"Then you think we are learning nothing to qualify us for parsons, all this time?"

"Why, if things are to go in at one ear and out at the other, which you know is the way with a pretty many of you, it can't much matter what sort that learning is. But you do learn something besides mischief, I honestly confess to you, up at Oxford.

For, you don't think, sir, that I have taken up coach-loads of boys and brought back the same raw commodity I may say manufactured—that is, that I have booked the same coach-loads three years after as men, and made no observations all the time—going on three-and-twenty years come Michaelmas?"

"Now for your observations, Edwards."

"I was going to say, that you go up as fresh and fanciful as if you thought the moon were made of green cheese; you drop all the conceit and childishness when you're there, and come back sensible. There are no gentlemen I travel with like you Oxford gentlemen, towards the end of your time, to fall in with men and things as they are."

"You mean to say, we have been taught to know ourselves; neither timid in what we can do, nor aspiring to what we cannot, but fitting smoothly like cogs in the big wheel of society?"

"That is just my meaning, sir; well put, indeed: some men are like oil to that wheel of society—some just like grit. You College gentlemen are like the oil; you work glib, smooth, and easy: you seldom talk against the grain, or make a man feel uncomfortable. One in a dozen of you is, perhaps, a scholar into the bargain; but you, nearly all of you, learn, as I say, to behave yourselves. Poor Mr. Glover—plucked or not—and really I pitied him—he would pass in common sense any how. I 'examine' them, sir, after my fashion, regularly, sir, I can tell you."

"Then you must know, Edwards, I am intended for the Church, and I am glad to find you have hit upon one more branch of useful knowledge than the world gives Oxford credit for."

"Well, sir, but how long will it be before I am to have the pleasure of sitting under you?"

"Two years must pass away first."

"Now, I should just like to know, sir, what you are going to do with yourself these two years?"

"In other words, you have formed an opinion on that point also?"

"I have, sir; for I carry a good many Methodies, Baptists, Bible Christians, and some of all sorts, up and down the road."

"And you 'examine' them, too?"

"Right again, sir. I do have a good deal of talk and argument with them, and there's one story they all agree in, which is, if the clergy would only talk plain English from the pulpits, and speak from the heart, the Dissenters might almost close their chapels. Now, sir, you'll allow there are two sorts of English: one

that is spoken in drawing-rooms, the other s
the one is a conversational language, the other l
like talking to a man, the other like preaching to ages;
sound, the other sense.—The Dissenters use the o ne is
the other; nine sermons out of ten, as far as the poo e is
cerned, might just as well be Greek." ey

"But you would not have us preach in such a coa
gar manner as the Dissenters?"

"No, sir; I say, copy what's good, not what's bad, They can command attention when they preach, and you clergy can't. Suppose I made up my conversation before I s who'd listen to me? As it is, I have a certain quantity st away in my head, and it comes out when and where it's wa. That's like the Dissenters. A doctor on our coach once s. smartly enough that a Church-of-England sermon ought to be li a separate prescription; but instead of that it is more like a bo of family pills, a kind of general prescription for all constitutions and all complaints: and, worse than that, it is very often about the very last thing in the world to do poor and plain folk any good."

"Then you think our topics ill chosen, and our language not the King's English?"

"King's English, indeed! Nothing like it. Why, if I were to talk such English to our horse-keepers and 'pike-men, I should never get along the King's highway. There isn't one trade or calling that could be carried on with pulpit English. It won't work week-days, so why try it Sundays? Your sentences are twice as long as a sensible man ever forms his mouth to. Don't tell me about a style coarse or vulgar. Read John Bunyan. Isn't his style genteel enough for you? Yes, that help's me to explain myself; preach John Bunyan's English, and let it, like that wonderful book of his, be about something. Not 'moral influences,' not 'relative obligations;' that's all for the head: we want something to the heart. A hawker said the other day, 'People won't buy a tract that has not a tale in it.'"

There was deep wisdom in all this. Of course Edwards meant, choose that pure Saxon, those familiar household words, which speak so feelingly; and prefer the concrete, or illustrative, to the abstract or the philosophical. But, years passed away before I fully realised the truth of his homely counsel. Edwards would have reminded me of the words so little understood, "Without a parable spake He not unto them." Our Great Teacher never taught without an illustration; how rarely do we teach with one!

For, you don't think, sir, that I have taken up coach-loads of boys and brought back the same raw commodity I may say manufactured—that is, that I have booked the same coach-loads three years after as men, and made no observations all the time—going on three-and-twenty years come Michaelmas?"

"Now for your observations, Edwards."

"I was going to say, that you go up as fresh and fanciful as if you thought the moon were made of green cheese; you drop all the conceit and childishness when you're there, and come back sensible. There are no gentlemen I travel with like you Oxford gentlemen, towards the end of your time, to fall in with men and things as they are."

"You mean to say, we have been taught to know ourselves; neither timid in what we can do, nor aspiring to what we cannot, but fitting smoothly like cogs in the big wheel of society?"

"That is just my meaning, sir; well put, indeed: some men are like oil to that wheel of society—some just like grit. You College gentlemen are like the oil; you work glib, smooth, and easy: you seldom talk against the grain, or make a man feel uncomfortable. One in a dozen of you is, perhaps, a scholar into the bargain; but you, nearly all of you, learn, as I say, to behave yourselves. Poor Mr. Glover—plucked or not—and really I pitied him—he would pass in common sense any how. I 'examine' them, sir, after my fashion, regularly, sir, I can tell you."

"Then you must know, Edwards, I am intended for the Church, and I am glad to find you have hit upon one more branch of useful knowledge than the world gives Oxford credit for."

"Well, sir, but how long will it be before I am to have the pleasure of sitting under you?"

"Two years must pass away first."

"Now, I should just like to know, sir, what you are going to do with yourself these two years?"

"In other words, you have formed an opinion on that point also?"

"I have, sir; for I carry a good many Methodies, Baptists, Bible Christians, and some of all sorts, up and down the road."

"And you 'examine' them, too?"

"Right again, sir. I do have a good deal of talk and argument with them, and there's one story they all agree in, which is, if the clergy would only talk plain English from the pulpits, and speak from the heart, the Dissenters might almost close their chapels. Now, sir, you'll allow there are two sorts of English: one

that is spoken in drawing-rooms, the other spoken in cottages; the one is a conversational language, the other bookish; the one is like talking to a man, the other like preaching to him; the one is sound, the other sense.—The Dissenters use the one, your clergy the other; nine sermons out of ten, as far as the poor man is concerned, might just as well be Greek."

"But you would not have us preach in such a coarse and vulgar manner as the Dissenters?"

"No, sir; I say, copy what's good, not what's bad, in them. They can command attention when they preach, and you Church clergy can't. Suppose I made up my conversation before I started who'd listen to me? As it is, I have a certain quantity stowed away in my head, and it comes out when and where it's wanted. That's like the Dissenters. A doctor on our coach once said smartly enough that a Church-of-England sermon ought to be like a separate prescription; but instead of that it is more like a box of family pills, a kind of general prescription for all constitutions and all complaints: and, worse than that, it is very often about the very last thing in the world to do poor and plain folk any good."

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For, the parable is only the Oriental form of the concrete or the *illustrative* style. The life of William Jay, late of Bath, contains valuable hints to any young clergyman who would apply our Saviour's method of teaching by parable to the habits of the present day.

"But," continued Edwards, "I have an observation to make on one point more. You College gentlemen, as you sit beside me on this coach, can choose such subjects and conversation as is interesting to a man, and such as suits his mood and temper. Some of those half-bred people I take up on the road have not the sense and feeling to do this. For instance, some will begin to threaten me with railways, and talk of coaches being driven off the road; just as if, true or not, news like this would make me in the best of humours. You gentlemen never cross the grain like that, and this shows me that you have some common sense and tact in you: that you can suit your conversation to your company, and that your heart beats true to your neighbour's heart.

"This is what I meant by saying you had learnt to behave yourselves; and why can't you study your parishioners' minds and feelings in the same way? Out of all the interesting and all the plain texts and stories in the Bible, why should you choose matters which are no more suited to your hearers than to the man in the moon, if there is such a gentleman? Suppose, in our coaching business, our governor has any plain message to give me, he does it by word of mouth; but if he has any matter of accounts, or anything a man can't catch at once telling, he says, 'Here 'tis written down, you can make out all this when quiet of an evening.' But there isn't one parson in a hundred who has the sense to act so.

"Yet, see how necessary this is in teaching Scripture. Some texts are plain of themselves, good truths and useful; some texts are plain with a word of explanation; some texts nothing will make plain but reading and study. Now it's this last kind you generally make sermons about. All this comes, as Sam Slick says, 'from not studying human natur.' The Dissenter can see this, but you can't. The reason is, the Dissenter gets his bread by it. If he loses his passengers, his coach must stop; so Mr. Methody begins to consider what will keep his connexion a little together. This is for all the world like free trade: the demand regulates the supply. I know you'll say, this causes flattery, and doctrine rather pleasant than wholesome. I allow for all this; but, without denying the rant, and the ignorance, and all the false trickery of some who take up Sunday-preaching to help their week-day

trade, there is much indeed that the Church clergy, if they will but condescend, may learn from the Dissenters."

"Then, Edwards, you agree with me that the Dissenter has often an eye to his trade?"

"Why, as to that, sir, they must make it pay somehow; for they," he said, with a sly look at me, "are very short of what we call family livings."

I could not help smiling at that retort, and after a while he continued,—

"Talking of texts, sir, the text, if properly chosen, is the best part of the sermon for the poor. The poor man's religious knowledge is made up of texts. If he learns but one text a Sunday, say fifty a-year—talked of in the churchyard, and running in his head all the week—what a blessing it must be to him! Like the little leaven and the grain of mustard-seed, it spreads fast, and takes deep root within him.—I remember hearing of a common soldier who once, for a wonder, went to church, and heard, 'There is no rest for the wicked, saith the Lord.' This man led an evil life, and had a very rough time of it, and with every fresh trouble, this same voice and the same words, 'There is no rest for the wicked, saith the Lord,' rang in his ears; and led to his reformation.

"Now, just suppose that this poor ignorant fellow had heard our text last Sunday, which was something about the Hivites and Jebusites in the morning, or the one the Sunday morning before, about something in the Valley of Jehoshaphat; I leave you to judge, sir, how much *leavening* there is in such texts as these.—Add to this, with simple country folk, you have so much the character of preaching things too fine for them, and fit only for the squire's pew, that no sooner has John heard the text, than he makes himself up quite comfortable in the corner of his seat, and wears a look as much as to say, 'Now I'm ready for half an hour of it,' and as if it were a virtue to put up with it—for he hasn't a notion of listening—till he's let out of church.—So, mind you always think of the poor soldier, or of Chawbacon John, when you choose your text or make your sermon."

Much more passed between us before the end of the journey. There is a great deal of wisdom in this world to be learnt without the aid of books; and a stage-coachman with a well-formed mind—and such men we all have known in the old coach days—is in no bad situation for hearing, comparing, and drawing just conclusions.

Samuel Edwards was a man who read, and was fond of quoting

aptly, and very wittily sometimes. One day, when there was a stoppage of carts and carriages, and several drivers were disputing, with low language, who should move first, Edwards cried out, in striking contrast, "Stand not on the order of your going, but go at once."

After a time he continued, "You said, I think, sir, that you had two years to study for the Church——"

"But I'm afraid you can hardly help me much in that direction."

"I don't know that, sir. Perhaps I could direct your studies a little better than you would think: but of course, not as to learning. You must have plenty of that already, perhaps too much—like the raw recruit's sword, always too long for him, getting between his legs and tripping him up. No: I can tell you nothing about your learning, except to take care and keep it out of sight; but, if I could have my way, and put on the wishing cap, what do you think I would give you—I mean, for the next two years' work? Why, I would give you—these are not my words, you will understand, but the words of a very longheaded man that travels this road with me—I'd give you:

"1. Your mother tongue to learn;

"2. A poor man's heart to anatomise; and,

"3. A poor man's brain to dissect.

"Ah! sir; you may despise the Dissenters if you like; but they are, in one way, your very best friends. Without them, it would have been downright stagnation in the Church a long time ago. They keep you a little to your work: they've already made you march a pretty deal faster than the 'regulation step.' They are very vexatious, I dare say—an opposition team always is—emptying your coach into theirs. Now, I'm not over and above fond of these Dissenters, though there are good as well as bad in every party; but what I dislike is, that they carry such a face with them—no more their own face than if it took on and off, which oftentimes I think it does: but, for all that, my firm belief is—to speak a solemn thing in a plain way—that you Churchmen will none of you travel to your great journey's end more slowly because they carry on a lively opposition on the same road!"

Such were the materials for much after-thought with which some forty miles of space and some six hours of time passed away.

On reaching home, I need hardly say that there was no little conversation for the first day or two about my late examination. "How I passed?" "Whether I was nervous?" and "How many

were plucked?". I remember relating to my mother, who listened with painful interest and excitement, the unhappy case of a married man, whose wife was keeping terms with him in lodgings in St. John's Street. He had been, and indeed still was, a very wild young man, and while living in country quarters under sentence of rustication for two years, a severe sentence, but intended, probably, to give his naughty companions time to disperse—for, every wild young man (of course) would be innocence itself were it not for some one else so cruel as to mislead him—he had married for love, and was as much embarrassed as others ever have been and ever will be who shut their eyes to the fact that matrimony is a "matter-of-money" after all. I used to be invited to take tea with him, ostensibly to hear the lady sing, but much more commonly to hear a puling little infant squall; for, the walls were thin and the floor sonorous (in what lodgings are they not?). My once merry-hearted friend had begun to be steadied by this burthen on his back, and the large establishment around him; for, the said establishment consisted not only of a wife, a baby, and a nurse, but he had also to give a daily audience to impatient tradesmen, being afflicted with duns innumerable.

Poor fellow! He said, "Duns are a mere nothing to a single man: for, with a good joke about my ship in the Downs, and a glass of black strap, I could send them on quite comfortable; but now they stick like leeches. It is the sight of that fat nurse and baby and pap-apparatus eating me up, which is at the bottom of it all. Then, my wife does take on so: she never saw a dun in her life before she married me. It is time she was used to them; but instead of that she grows worse and worse. I said, 'Now, Mary, they can't take the child in execution; so nothing very bad can happen.' Still, for all I can do or say, the duns worry her, and then she worries me, and when I go to lecture I'm as stupid and absent as an owl."

"And didn't he pass?" asked my mother anxiously.

"You shall hear, mother. Every time I went, the interesting lady used to look up at me imploringly, if he left the room, when I had been 'coaching' her Johnny in his logic, and would say: "Well, Mr. Austin, this is kind of you; any spare evening I shall be *so* happy to see you in this quiet way. But does Johnny improve? Will he pass?'

"Of course I always answered with a saving clause; full of hopes that all would be well. But one evening she came round me very ingeniously, and said, 'Mr. Austin, of which do you think Johnny knows most—of his Logic, or—of his Divinity?'

"Not suspecting the drift of her question, I replied, 'I think I may say that he decidedly knows most of his Divin——' I felt the cat had head and fore-paws out of the bag, and tried to draw back, but couldn't. A long-drawn sigh told me what I had disclosed, for the lady was herself 'coaching' Johnny in his Divinity; and, keeping her mind's eye fixed on the most promising of her late charity-school class as the lowest standard she could imagine of academical proficiency, she felt that his chance must be small indeed; for she declared that in any fair examination, as he once expressed it, 'her Polly Dodds could beat his head off.'"

"But did he pass?" asked my mother, urgently.

"It were to be hoped he would, mother: for, the living in expectancy would be much jeopardised by any delay in his being ordained. So, as I was saying, we all did our best; the lady filling up spare corners with the Divinity, I subsidising with the Logic, and the private tutor cramming all things in ordinary. As the day for the examination or the opening of the schools drew nigh, the wife's anxiety became extreme, and exhibited itself in such admonitions and such fidgeting of her Johnny as was by no means favourable to mature digestion of sorites, syllogisms, or enthymems. 'I tell ye what, Mr. Austin,' said the nurse one day, 'it's high time as master was passed, or plucked out of the way, or summat; for it do keep up such a worriting of missus that this poor innocent little babe is pretty nigh starved.'"

"The woman showed her sense," said my mother, in a high state of maternal excitement; "but tell me, did the silly young man pass?" repeated my mother impatiently.

"Well, I was saying, mother, the day came for putting down his name at the Proctor's for examination; then his name was low down on the list, and his turn didn't come till the ninth day: I did all I could to cram him, and to quiet Mrs. Walters. His paper work came on first—'Did you answer all the questions?' inquired Mrs. Walters eagerly. Of course he said, 'Not all—no man is expected to answer them all.'—This seemed evasive, and only made the fond wife's anxieties the more intense.

"At last came his *viva voce* examination, and in the evening of that day his fate was to be decided. You should have seen Mrs. Walters that morning, mother. I breakfasted with them; she had smoothed and ironed the customary bands and white tie, she put some brandy in her husband's tea, she entreated him to keep himself perfectly composed, though she kept fidgeting him all the time, and indeed, she did everything she possibly could think of to give him the shadow of a ghost of a chance more than he had

before; and the poor wife did seem as if she were herself on a trial of life and death."

"But I must know, Harry; tell me the end at once: has he got through?"

"No, mother; no. I think you might have guessed that."

"Shameful! But did the examiners know he was a married man?—I am sure I would have written and told them, had I been his wife. Yes, and I would not have been too particular to say that I had a baby, either, and so touch their feelings if they had any."

"Oh, yes, mother, they generally find out these critical positions."

"And how did he bear his fate?"

"Why, I went to wait for his *testamur* at the door of the schools in the corner of the quadrangle, and he walked about in a fever of excitement up and down by the Bodleian. Well, out came Purdue, the clerk of the schools, and said, 'Seven *testamurs* out of eight—all safe but Mr. Walters.'"

"The blow would have made me sink into the earth," said my mother. "And did you run and tell him?"

"No, mother, I ran the other way. I couldn't tell him; I wrote a note, and all that kind of thing. But I can't tell you any more, for it makes me miserable."

"I should think so, indeed! But what is he going to do? Where is he gone? Has the poor wife any friends?"

"Why, he left by the Monarch—with Mrs. Walters, baby, and nurse—to read with Hotham, of Queen's, all the long vacation. Mrs. Walters saw me by the coach-office: she squeezed my hand, and looked up at me with tears in her eyes, but couldn't speak. Not so the nurse. 'I know'd how it would be, Mr. Austin,' she said, with a knowing look; 'and so must you have known—didn't you, now?—before ever the *w*erdict. Master never looked to me at all a likely sort to pass nothing; but then there's an end of it—now he's plucked out of his misery, that is one blessing.' And then she added, in what was intended for a whisper, 'Missus was forced to wean the baby!'"

Next term, I am happy to say, he passed; but whether, after all, Polly Dodds could not have "beaten his head off," as his wife opined, in any fair divinity examination, I very much doubt. Cramming is not very favourable to a healthy digestion, either of mind or body. However, as I met this interesting party again in the course of my adventures, we will here take leave of them for the present.

In a few days all the excitement about my having ended my University education, and taken my degree, had passed away. The coachman's views of my position seemed true to human nature; for, instead of that season of enjoyment which we are so apt to promise ourselves whenever we have turned one of the anxious corners on the road of this life, I felt a new influence, a new motive power at work; I felt that a certain general expectation, and taking-it-as-a-matter-of-course in the minds of every body—that all this thrust me onwards and denied me rest. I could not as much as go to a tea-party, but numberless little impertinences and suggestive inquiries reminded me that my father had other children besides me, and that "no doubt I was forming my plans." Then, Mrs. Cantankerous would ask one sister, and Miss De Meanour would ask another, what I was going to do next?

This expectation, and all this surprising interest that was manifested in me and my fortunes, daily increased, till at the end of six months it grew to the breadth of "What! Mr. Harry still here?—still at home!" As much as to say, "What! still living on your parents? An overgrown child like you not weaned yet!"—How many ways are there, in that everyday conversation which pretends to be the courteous interchange of sterling sentiments—how many ways there are of palming and uttering the base coin of an envious spirit!

To borrow the illustration of the fairy tale, how many a heart must be teeming with toads and vipers, if we judge by the venom which, however artfully disguised, is hourly escaping through the lips! "Put out your tongue," says the doctor; and, not only physically but morally, I could not wish for a surer test of all being sound within. But "God ruleth over all." Wasps and reptiles have their use in his scheme of mercy; so, doubtless, have ill-natured men and women. Perhaps they are designed as the police, or the detectives of society, or like Joseph Humes in the House of Commons—ready to hit every blot, and teaching us a safe and cautious game.

And so it came to pass, that the waspish impertinence of some silly old dames roused me to exertion. Samuel Edwards's observation recurred forcibly to my mind. It was indeed time, as he said, that I made room "in the family nest, and began to peck a little on my own account." But really it wanted something to rouse me, as it does to rouse any man fresh from College—to a full sense of the truth that his father's purse and patience have an end, and he must work for himself. All my life up to that date I had been passive—the object, not the agent—the channel of parental

affection, and the nursling of anxiety and care. The sums paid on my account to old Griskin for schooling, and the cheques for battels and pocket-money while at College — I am ashamed of my thoughtlessness when I confess it — called forth the mere formal thanks of courtesy to my father, but gratitude, as for the hardly-saved earning of self-denial, none! — It is a very impressive and a very painful reflection which I have made throughout life, that till we have ourselves attained to a parent's position, or a parent's age, it is wonderful how little we feel that debt we never can repay.

It was only after years had passed away, when the good old man had been carried by us to the church of our infancy, and we had returned, and returned without him,—when his drawers and desk had been ransacked, and we felt all our old childish scruples in peeping into those mysterious pigeon-holes so carefully closed under lock and key,—it was only then, as the family purse fell under my control, that I could realise those anxious qualms with which one draws on capital to advance a youth in this world—a certain loss for a most uncertain advantage. It was only then that I could realise how — far more than twenty long years — the family yearnings had pulled one way, and a father's foresight made him pull the other: and that all our little "'tis buts" and petitions for treats and indulgence seemed like so many gnawings at a cable which alone kept the family vessel from drifting at the mercy of the winds and waves!

It was therefore high time that I should "do something profitable;" but I had more mentors still. At College I was, what they call, prudent, and did not leave like numbers, overwhelmed with debt. And so, reader, you are perhaps clear and even with the demands of this world; but put all the mere nothings that you owe as compactly together as if you had to change your present residence, and you would find it a little inconvenient to provide. And if so, feel for me.

It was now Christmas, and the compliments of the season fell thick upon me in the shape of tradesmen's bills. Every supposed five or six shillings turned out eleven and tenpence, and bills expected as one pound ten stared me in the face as two pounds twelve. Then, my father had talked so confidently of having done with College dues at last that I had not the heart to undeceive him.

There are many methods of teaching a man the value of money; but the most impressive of all is, "Only let him try to borrow some." That will indeed be "a caution" to any man. Something must be done. So, first of all I went to Mr. Field, our

solicitor—begged him on no account to tell my father of my application—but I wanted, "quite in the way of business, fifty pounds at interest." Mr. Field uttered a kind of half-audible "hem," and looked a little quiet and serious. Then we talked some twenty minutes: I explaining my difficulty, he, the nature of "good security." The result was that, as the most civil kind of negative, he referred me to our banker.

Mr. Meadows, the banker, a good, worthy soul, had known me from a child, and forgot—for indeed there was little then to remind him—that I was not a child still. With an intuitive perception of the cause of my nervousness and confusion, he led me by the arm into his private room, the technical term for which is "the sweating-room," so called from the way that the courage of needy applicants oozes through their palms. He then said I must compose myself, and tell my story.

I was melted by his sympathy, I made a clean breast at once. I said how unwilling I was to trouble my father, and expressed my hopes of soon earning money to repay the loan. He replied instantly, that loans for indefinite periods were contrary to all rules of banking, and then he continued—"Your scruples, my good friend, as to your father, do you much honour, and your application might indeed be, just now——that is, your father has a family, you know, and many expenses. I would gladly advise you for the best." He then paused awhile, as if in meditation,—a pause which was anything but rest from anxiety to me. He then continued,—

"Now take my advice, Mr. Harry: spare your feelings the pain—utterly fruitless, I am quite sure—of applying in matters of money to casual friends. I have not served to my time of life at the tables of the money-changers without learning, how this world's friendship shrinks and recoils at the very name of gold. Your simplicity interests me deeply, for I well remember when your confiding spirit was my own. I know better now. The money of the generous is soon bespoken; the money of the selfish is clutched to the very grave. Prefer your request to some relation, and if you succeed—as I hope and trust you may—you will learn to prize relationship in this life, and will never after forget that, in the day of adversity, the family circle too often comprises our only friends."

As I walked homewards, I felt as if three hours had made me three years older. Fifty pounds seemed to me so little, but to everybody else so much. Well, I thought, it is time indeed I should earn something.—Earn! but this would sacrifice my inde-

pendence!—No sooner had I muttered this to myself than I almost laughed aloud. Independence, indeed! Why, a debtor is a slave! A set of cobblers and tailors at this very hour hold me by a tie which nothing but dishonesty can part; and perhaps they want money for their creditors, too, and are running about in vain to borrow because I withhold their own!

My mind was soon made up. I determined to lose no time in seeking for a tutorship in some rich family. Whether expected to walk with the housekeeper, or doomed to be snubbed by the butler, at that balancing of miseries, I cared not a rush; but meanwhile the payment of my debts could admit of no delay. Accordingly, I wrote to my fond and ever-kind Aunt Charlotte, to tell my pitiful story, and to request a loan till I found employment.

The next post showed me how well founded was the advice of Mr. Meadows. I had now tried within the magic circle, and the treasure immediately appeared; and accompanied with such a letter as would throw all worldly friendships into the shade. She said she had loved me from a child; she had watched anxiously my college career, and yet more anxiously my father's various speculations, and would not for the world I should have applied to one who at that moment had demands which, she would now inform me, almost denied him rest. Still, not a word must I let drop: she was aware of all his perplexities, and had been making a purse for several years, as so much heart's-ease, in case her poor brother should come to grief. God had ever blessed her store, and early had she learnt that prudence was the keystone of charity.

She inclosed fifty pounds, and said this I must consider as a gift. She dreaded the very thought of loans; there was something hard and grating in the name of creditor, and a true Christian, she felt, should never be owed anything but love. She quoted Dr. Johnson, that "being in debt made all virtues difficult, and some impracticable," and hoped I always should remember a wise saying which she was thankful that she had read in early life, that "all good men were careful first to make both ends meet, and next to give away what lapped over."

Then she ran on about "those dreadful railways"—covetousness and speculation. All the world seemed "set upon gain, and was running after reward." Her healthful instincts told her that some blow must come. Her dear brother must be distracted, she was quite sure; but what pained her most was, that his whole soul was drawn into this greedy gulf. For, Sundays or week-days to speculators were all the same; the mind was kept in one giddy

whirl, and nothing pure and peaceable could be congenial to their hearts.

I said that it was now Christmas—"Merry Christmas,"—soon to be followed by "Happy New Year." So generally is this considered a happy season; and happy indeed it is to some people—happy enough to the young and light-hearted, just as the County Assizes is a very merry time for half the town. The Assize-ball for the ladies, and rich fees for leading counsel, make very good fun indeed; but the poor prisoners would tell a different story. And how many painful convictions does the "old year out" carry to the heart! The failing merchant realises the truth that ruin is gradually stealing on: for, every balance comes out more adverse than the last; while the prodigal or the speculator finds the day of reckoning can no longer be delayed. His unconscious wife must soon hear it as the crash of thunder; his little ones may gambol round the bright Christmas fire, forming a picture of a happy home, yet every merry laugh sends a pang to the heart of him who knows how fleeting all that joy must be.

Such was my poor father's Christmas; or, rather, such it would have been, had not sundry of those drops of 'heart's-ease' from that kind and self-denying sister's cruse passed like oil into his bones.

CHAPTER IV.

HOW I BECAME A NOBLEMAN'S TUTOR, AND STUDY MEN AND MANNERS, AS WELL AS BOOKS.

I HAVE said I was perplexed by urgent demands upon my purse, and my father proved to have his difficulties too. The natural cure for poverty is hard work. My resolution was soon carried into effect. Mr. Meadows made known my intentions, and by his kind exertions, in two months I was private tutor to Lord Oxton's son, to prepare him for Eton, and had nestled down in a snug little room looking over the deer-park at Norlands. I was not long in making acquaintance with another private tutor at a neighbouring country house, and with three curates, and soon heard the talk of the neighbourhood.

My own position was a most enviable one. Lord Oxton was not of the fungus tribe. He could number some five ancestors in the family vault, and his honours sat easy on him. I dwell on this point, because the family vault is almost the only distinctive characteristic of nobility now remaining. Even tombstones have been forged—baronial armour can be ordered like tin kettles—a voluptuous-looking great-grandmother by Sir Peter Lely, and a piqued-chinned ancestor by Vandyke;—all these things are matters for the upholsterer. I have even known a library ordered by the yard! These last-mentioned insignia of gentility were all correct in the mansion of the rich Mr. Marchmont, to whom my friend Bailey was private tutor; but, as the retired manufacturer entered the church—quite the private chapel of Norlands—the family monument, with old Lord and Lady Oxton sleeping uncomfortably on their backs, and two little Oxtons in marble chemises kneeling for everlasting at their sides, seemed every Sunday to say to the pretentious Mrs. Marchmont, "Live up to that, ma'am, if you can."

"I could get on very well with Marchmont," said Bailey, "but it is the lady who is so fine. A Sheffield manufactory sharpens

wits as well as knives, and Marchmont seems half-impatient of the donkey race of fashionable competition with a set of country noodles, as he calls them, which his wife has persuaded him to run. He said to me, 'Life is made up of competition: competition as boys for school prizes, as well as in games of trap and ball; competition as men, whether in professions or in trade. It is not the money that made me happy, any more than the fox in hunting —not that I ever see much of the fox after a field or two, you know —only, the money scores up and registers our gains and success, and that too in a most absorbing game. No! it is, as I said, the competition. Now, this being the case, I like competition about something useful, not in such trash as the cut of liveries, or the breed of puppy-dogs. To calculate the demand of distant markets, and to be complimented on 'Change with my foresight in ventures to the other side of the globe, this I consider worth my while; but bless me, in this dull place men are so slow! If they were any slower they would stand still. Oxton has some sense in him, certainly; he has onerous duties, both in the country and in the House. But, as to the rest of the people here, when I meet them at the magistrates' meeting, they don't like me. Despatch business is what I am used to, and I have no idea of letting the clerk find brains for the whole bench, as at the magistrates' meetings he too often does: so, I'm too sharp for them, and am like a wire-haired terrier among so many fat poodles: and then they look cool at me when we meet at dinner. As to these absurd and show-off dinner-parties, they give a great deal of trouble and very little pleasure. And people are so envious of Mrs. Marchmont, for distancing them so cruelly with her plate and finery, that they keep up a kind of county-clique conversation, purposely to make her feel that she is not used to that. I only wish we had never come here—we were both happy at Sheffield, and here we are both miserable!"

"Now, do you know," said Bailey, "I was not aware of all this when I came here; and at the first party, I forgot I was asked to dine in the room only for the style of the thing, and as 'our tutor,' and part of the establishment: so, I had the unconscionable presumption to sit up at table, and to look around me as if I were still Bailey of Oriel."

"Why, that is just what I do at Norlands," I replied, "allowing for some natural deference and reserve."

"Yes, you lucky fellow! you are safe enough. Lord Oxton has no part to play but his own, so you would have yourself only to blame if you did not feel quite at your ease. However, on the

occasion in question, the consequence of my mistake was, that the guests paid off Mrs. Marchmont by performing feats of undivided attention to me whenever I opened my lips. College stories came forth to their great amusement—for they kept on drawing me out —till at last they told Mr. and Mrs. Marchmont, as plainly as inuendo impertinence could speak, that they could not rival their own tutor, in spite of their plate, glass, china, made dishes, and all."

I have seen many Baileys and many Marchmonts throughout life. I have seen many young men commit the great mistake of being too brilliant, and thus throwing their rich friends, dinners and all, into the shade. What Mr. Marchmont said is true. This life is nothing without competition of some kind; and since a thousand can only compete with money, to one who can compete with mind, it is with money and money's worth that those who have neither taste nor talent ever will compete for this world's applause.

As to the jealousy of the men of money against the men of mind—the thought that in this happy land there is one free and open course for all, and that the lawn sleeves and the ermine robe are sometimes worn by men whose fathers and mothers could never rise higher than the oak bench in the squire's hall—the common sight of a suburban villa, with, perhaps, some lath-and-plaster Minerva *vis-à-vis* to chalk Apollo on the grass-plot, standing as a monument of the fact that Mr. Figs the grocer, or Mr. Tape the draper, was a promising boy in the school of commerce, and left off at the top of his class;—this, I admit, is truly gratifying to every generous mind.

The touchy fraternity of Messrs. Figs and Tape I have had to deal with in almost every parish I have undertaken; and great are the difficulties this class has caused me. Reserve they call "pride," and a delicacy of feeling is "being stiff;" and I have seemed to them purposely to raise a frostwork of etiquette "to chill the genial current of their soul." When a blaze of plate had been rubbing up all the morning on purpose to astonish me, and my looks evinced no astonishment after all; and when my wife's simple muslin did not even catch a blush from Mrs. Tape's scarlet satin, it was of course a cruel disappointment to people whose consequence had nothing else but plate and satin to support it. So we have always been unpopular with such people.

If so little is the sympathy between the clergy and the shopocracy on week-days, what a bar to all persuasiveness on Sundays! Such is the melancholy truth. We feel easy and at home in a cottage; we feel equally at home in a palace. The peer and the

ploughman, the duchess and the dairymaid, alike confess in the Church-of-England clergy a heart and feeling in unison with their own. But the class between, just hanging on to the skirts of gentility, live on Brother Jonathan's own terms of misunderstanding.

If, therefore, my young clerical friends, you have hitherto known none but the habits of good society, I would advise you by no means to step across the social line. Be kind and accessible during the hours of duty; but beware of visiting out of your proper circle. It is true you may, like Robinson Crusoe, live in so desolate a land that you may be thankful even to make acquaintance with a savage. Country gentlemen, on wet and dreary days, pay the groom a morning call in the saddle-room, and the gardener an afternoon visit in the tool-house, in obedience to the same social instinct. I would simply caution you not to go beyond your accustomed circle with a view of gaining any vantage-ground with your parishioners. Painful experience has taught me, that people who associate with their superiors are always so suspicious of slight or neglect, that intimacy results in far more ill-feeling than it is ever likely to obviate. Something is sure to jar and to cause a painful misunderstanding.

But to return to Norlands. I now had time for reading, and time for diversion also. The keeper never refused Mr. Austin's assistance in hitting down some twenty brace of birds. Trout-fishing followed in the proper season; and, remembering Samuel Edwards's advice, I became gradually a close observer of the mind and manners of the poor — a much-neglected branch of moral philosophy. Their instincts and their intuitions are as true as ours, but their reasonings are very brief. One argument, one fact, and one conclusion may prevail; but a series of connected arguments is lost upon them.

Another observation I made around Norlands was, that the poor are hard of hearing, and comparatively deaf, as also slow of hearing or of receiving strong impressions. The Barrister knows this, and the Dissenter knows it, and both adopt a style to suit their dull and sleepy nature. They are lucid and energetic — they limit themselves to a few and striking topics, — they are not afraid of putting the same fact in an almost tedious variety of ways.

"Suppose, I say"—this is the remark of an intelligent Dissenter — "My brethren, 'the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.' Honest John says to himself, 'What's that? I wasn't quite listening: let us hear that again.'—Well, soon it

comes a second time, and he thinks 'Very well; now I like that, as much as I can catch of it.' In a minute or two it comes a third time, and he can say both parts of the text over to himself. Then I divide it into two parts and pound away with, first: the *Heart is deceitful*, with a remark or two, and an appeal to John's own experience. After that I tell the story of David, and how Nathan made David feel the deceitfulness of his heart; for David had overlooked in himself the very sin he so heartily condemned in another. John remembers that story, and tells it again at the stile or the almshouse as he goes home. I end with pounding away that the heart is also *desperately wicked*, and remind John of murders, and lying, and cheating, and swearing, all signs of a wicked heart; and then I wind up by saying Who can alone make the heart less deceitful and less wicked, and Who alone can blot out of God's book all the deceit and lying, and all sin and wickedness now written so black against us.

"Now, sir," he continued, "pardon me; but in one of your sermons you will say ten times as much, but not give John time to swallow and not a chance of digesting any one thing that you tell him. You think it is not like a scholar to use many words; but remember, the Barrister does not think so: he uses more words or few, according as he addresses a common jury of farmers or a special jury of educated men. Nay more, if you hear the same Barrister arguing before the Judges, he seems almost independent of all rules of speech. Reference to well-known cases and brief suggestions convey as much as a long argument."

In the course of my rambles, the keepers, the grooms, and the gardeners of Norlands, bore ample testimony to the truth of these remarks: "My lord likes us to go to church," said James Bell, "and so we go: but we edify most at meetings by a pretty deal. A very good gentleman is your Mr. Hunter, but we don't carry much of his sermons away with us. Last Sunday I thought I had the first part in my head, when on came the second part, and while I was trying to mind that too, on comes the third part, and puts them both out. But, sir, when we comes out of meetings, there is always something to think of and to talk of, so it is best for those who are not scholars any how."

When I heard this, I remembered what worthy Fuller said about not being too concise in a popular discourse: "Without a fair proportion of chaff in his feed, the horse is apt to bolt his oats."

Mr. Hunter, the curate, I saw frequently, and I met two or three other young clergymen at his lodging, which was of a very

simple description, at a neighbouring farm-house. One and all of these curates talked about "our Squire" and his temper and peculiarities, and how to humour and conciliate him. It seemed to me at first that each curate had a dangerous yard-dog to throw a sop to; so I asked, in my innocence, what squires could have to do with clerical life.

"A very natural question for a novice," said Hunter; "but were I examining chaplain to a bishop, I would set one paper of questions, not only about managing a parish, but also about managing a squire: ay, and I would ask how they would keep on good terms with a rector's wife, too."

"Yes," said the Rev. Daniel Alton, "very necessary lore indeed. I was going on swimmingly at my last parish. My school was getting fast out of debt; and I had one old surplice mended and one new one ordered for me the same year. Miss Saunders (she was our squire's daughter) used to take round the Soup Book and Clothing-Club Book) and could show me an entire list of subscriptions all marked 'Pd.'—a set of half-and-half people would pay her out of gentility, and to keep their standing in a certain clique; not all from charity, you know. Well, all this parochial prosperity was dashed to the ground, ostensibly because I would catechise after the second lesson."

"What! did the squire object? You should have had no sermon."

"Nor had I. My catechetical lecture was introduced instead of any sermon. My congregation kept increasing—our rustics learnt to listen, and seemed actually to be brightened up. I took great pains; I got together a stock of pat and pithy definitions: for, catechising requires careful study, it improves parsons as well as parish boys; and, just as all the cottagers were saying how much they learned—good lessons for parents as well as children, and all that—old Saunders said he considered such practices ultra-High-Church, and he couldn't countenance Tractarian heresies, but must nip them in the bud; and therefore he requested I would give it up."

"What! and did the clergy consent to be dictated to by the laity in this way?"

"Unhappily, the clergy did not. He stoutly maintained his point, and——"

"But he must have been a very ignorant man," I observed.

"If you are not prepared for darkness in high places, you will never manage a parish. But, you have not heard my story. Well, one day, when our subscription-list for the soup, the

clothes, and the school, were all half-blank together—when I was wasting my time in collecting, because Miss Saunders gave it up—when the charity-boys went birds'-nesting because there was *no* squire to give their mothers *no* soup, for putting *no* stick about their truant backs,—when, at every bad answer of the boys, the depreciating looks from the squire's pew were telegraphed among the hobnails and corduroys, ever siding with the stronger—and when I was so annoyed that I had hardly the spirit to catechise at all; I walked in about ten o'clock one morning, with my gun on my shoulder, to see Mr. Rotton; a respectable farmer, and the following conversation ensued:—

"'So, then, our squire has not stopped your shooting after all?'

"'No, he never mentioned the subject. You know that when I shoot I always rise at day-break, and I have generally bagged as many brace before ten o'clock as the squire can kill in a fortnight, and then I am fresh for parish work with the whole day before me.'

"'Yes. I heard the squire say as much—He is not much of a shot, is he? And when you have been out early and made the birds shy, the young squires laugh at him more than ever—They twig all about the Catechism, sir, I can tell you that.'

"'About the Catechism?'

"'Yes. All a pretence, sir; only that is your fancy, and shooting's his. So now, sir, you know as much as I do. You crossed him, and he has crossed you. If it had not been Catechism, it would have been something else.'

"'Really you surprise me, Mr. Rotton! But—true—it did occur to me that it was strange that a man who seemed to have so little religion in him, should be so particular about the very shade of it.'

"'Yes, sir; and if you'll take my advice, you won't waste your time here. Nothing can be carried against the big house.'

"'Then you think a squire's influence so very great in the parish?'

"'If the Dissenters had the squires on their side, they'd have all the poor. The squire's influence reaches everywhere. Farmers are looking after leases; labourers are looking after work; the bad ones of the parish want to stand well with the Justice; the paupers fear an enemy at the Board of Guardians; and nearly all are on the look-out for picking sticks, leasing, holiday ale, or old clothes. Even civil words and good looks from the squire's family on Sundays—all this helps. But the strongest power of all is

the jealousy of these poor ignorant souls—there's so much jealousy about the gifts of the lady and her friends. It isn't the value of what any one gets, but the fear that one should be set before another. Why, the hundredth part of a chance of Sally Tibbs being sent for up to the big house before Hannah Reed, would carry a poor family any way.—You've remarked the red cloaks among the church-going people, haven't you, sir?—Well, these red cloaks all came of a fancy of one of Squire Saunders's visitors. For that gentleman observed that a red cloak looked pretty, as he saw Dame Williams on the common: and, whenever he comes here to enjoy some hunting, he is sure to bring two or three red cloaks, and this keeps all eyes set upon the Hall people more than ever.'

"'I remember the cloaks,' said Eddowes; 'and I can easily suppose that, as to jealousy, they were like so many coals of fire in the parish. I know the poor well enough for that—the poor! did I say?—whether broken victuals in a red pitcher, or a venison dinner at Norlands—whether old shoes and red cloaks at the Hall, or stars and garters and the gold stick in waiting at the Palace—whether a keeper's lodge, or 'the Woods and Forests,' be the bone thrown into the human kennel, dogs of high and low degree all snarl and fight alike.'"

I have often thought of this conversation.—Yes, envy and jealousy form, of all foul streams, the most mighty in giving an impulse to the machinery of this world. Self-interest is always deemed strong, but envy, within its own dark sphere, is mightier, because more virulent and searching still.

I have as yet said nothing of my pupil, the Honourable Reginald Oxton, a boy of ten years of age, nor of Lady Oxton, whose tender and benevolent feelings made from the first a deep impression on my mind. There was a fair promise in Reginald, still he was fidgety and restless, starting like a caged bird if the keeper's gun broke the silence of our secluded study. The less attentive is the pupil, the greater is the strain upon the master. There is so much power of shock in the electric eel, and that expended, the creature is powerless for a certain season. There is also a kind of nervous electricity in the human brain quite as easy to discharge. Such is the exhaustion of teaching or education in its highest sense; that is, of throwing off sparks of energy, and parting with your own Promethean fire to awake to life some duller nature.

No doubt, some tutors are mere machines, and turn hogsheads into puncheons, and hundredweights into chaldrons, without any

anxiety or thought. A dull automaton may "*tupto.* it," by the hour, as my Uncle Toby says, and may murder Homer with a quiet conscience, and even grow fat upon his work, because he may feloniously keep back all mind out of the matter—even as a cook keeps the brandy from a Christmas pudding—and then we may say with Byron,—

" 'Tis Greece, but living Greece no more."

But, for my own part, mechanically, I never could work. If there was no sphere for my mind, my hand and tongue refused their several office.

My exertions were not lost. Lord and Lady Oxton saw at once that I was devoted to their son's best interest; and they probably appreciated my perseverance the more highly, because they measured my toil and patience in teaching by the effort it would have required in themselves. They therefore treated me with kind attention. Indeed, it is easy to suppose that the society of a cheerful, happy-minded, and lively young man—for at that time none of the darker cares of life had weighed me down—one who would come and go, just as they felt inclined for an hour's variety,—that this would be acceptable enough in a country house; and it was plain that my tone and manner suited them. For lords and ladies can be but gentle in their minds and manners. My parents and all my early companions were gentle too—all of that class called independent.

Oh, what an earthly blessing is contained in that single word Independence!—No customers could bid them be civil under pain of starvation; and no one had a hand on their purse-string, which, as regards power to dictate, is like having a finger and thumb on your gullet—so, they grew up gentlemen.

Of this class, I say, were my parents—gentle in expression, because the deeper cares and severities of busy life had never knit their brows, or given sharpness to their features—gentle in their carriage, because they had never been trained to watch an office clock, nor had any hard taskmaster hurried them out of all gracefulness of movement: they were also gentle or easy and composed, in themselves, because they had never sold the birthright of free agency, nor registered themselves as so many male and female cogs in the grinding and crushing wheels of mechanical life.—If such were my advantages, Lord and Lady Oxton could not have enjoyed much greater, and we were, therefore, in unison and sympathy with each other. When I add, that I was almost a boy

compared to them, feeling that instinctive deference which a Lord-lieutenant and one in the councils of her Majesty would naturally inspire, it will readily be supposed that they were pleased to find how little I was in the way, and how contentedly I resigned myself to my happy fate. My friend, tutor to Mr. Marchmont, amused me greatly: it seemed as much as he could do to maintain his own dignity, while mine took care of itself. The slightest hint from Lady Oxton would start me, without my hat, to the other end of the park: while Mrs. Marchmont's orders made poor Bailey indignant for a week!

While at Norlands, I learnt that the nobility are much misrepresented. No allowance is made for the fact that they are not only cradled in luxury, but flattered throughout life with the most fulsome adulation. Often have I blushed for my fellow-creatures to see how men would put their very necks beneath Lord Oxton's foot, and afterwards talk of pride because he trod upon them! Often have I seen letters addressed and audiences solicited, with every mendacious pretext of public business, by some silly fellow who simply desired to vary his lifelong insignificance by stuttering in the presence of a live lord.

The same morbid love of notoriety which makes one set of idiots shoot at the sovereign, makes another set pester noblemen. So a nobleman is compelled, in self-defence, to assume a distant manner to avoid intrusion, and this manner is represented as proud. It always seemed to me, that Lord Oxton found it quite refreshing to deal with one whose only boast it is that he minded his own business, and never imagined that any one knew whether a young fellow like me was at the end of the building or not.

The less notice I expected, the more I received. My ear became by degrees the natural vent for the little annoyances, as well as a channel for the more generous impulses which ever form, with the rich as with the poor, the lights and shades of daily life.

Lady Oxton—excuse my saying so much of one who early stole upon my heart—at ease herself, set all at ease around her. You should have heard Mrs. Harper, the steward's wife, and Jane Price, at the Lodge, talk before her. Her ladyship was not more free from curiosity, and listening to what people said, than other daughters of Mother Eve; and they had always enough to tell her, and she liked to hear them talk. A hermit in his cell may live in secret, but all persons with servants live in glass-houses. If ladies are curious about the movements of the palace, our labourers' wives are equally eager to learn and to chronicle the doings of the manor-house; so, nothing but the rigours of a silent

system could have prevented this lady from knowing all the petty rivalries and petty intrigues of petty people, to enjoy the passing sunbeams of her own favour.

And these genial sunbeams cheered and transported—and I may say, that they eventually purified and exalted—me for two whole years. This noble lady had known her share of trouble. Pale Death, says Horace, visits us all in turn, whether at the cottage or the squire's hall. So, one painful subject was always recurring to her thoughts. Her eldest son, a fine young man, of about my own age and appearance, within only one year of the day never to be forgotten—the festive celebration of his coming of age—caught cold in a blighting easterly wind, by the cover's side, and died of inflammation.

Many a mourner believes that the spirits of the dead, having "shuffled off this mortal coil," can burst from out their prison-house, and walk this earth again. So much undoubtedly is true—their memories cling to their former haunts, and the yearning imagination of a mother could easily replace on that lordly terrace the much-loved form of her darling Sidney, as there he stood and addressed the assembled tenantry, so soon once more to assemble on the same spot, and thence slowly to follow him to the grave.

One day I saw her start, as the keeper's gun was echoed from the Five-Oaks Hill—her Sidney's favourite wood for pheasants; and then she said, with a moving depth of sigh, "Ah! but that gun isn't his!" And so, gradually, the painfully flattering truth broke upon me that I was, in her imagination, identified with that son, and my mother's supposed anxieties with hers: then, all the care and watchfulness for my health, which I never appreciated in my own mother, seemed quite a burthen of obligation when reflected in a mother—no mother to me!

But, where was I? How goes my story?—Some one will stop and exclaim, "Was this a preparation for Holy Orders? Would you tell us that this was making ready for the Church?" It had, I think, a nearer connexion than some would suppose; for, I was reading new pages in the book of life, and studying human nature in a new aspect. So far well. At this period of my life I was full of buoyancy and youthful spirits, like a young steam-engine blowing off; while shooting, fishing, and teaching Reginald to play at cricket, were as so many safety-valves for my pent-up energies; for, I was but twenty-one years of age. And is it no preparation for the most solemn of all responsibilities, to be cooling down and sobering—to be working off the yeast of passion, and to be enjoying the fresh air and influences of creation,

while the sap is rising into every branch of the future tree—doomed as that tree is to weather many a pitiless storm before death lays his axe at the root?

There are some persons, I am very well aware, who would have sent me, without any allowance for my youthful character or age, to a training institution at some cathedral city, where I should have "practised sermon-writing under correction," and had a district for visiting the sick. I am far from saying that some men may not derive great benefit from such a system; but I must maintain it would not have suited my constitution, nor that of certain others. For, some men have no buoyancy to effervesce—no ardent spirits to rectify—mere bookworms, all head and no body, and rather of the nervous than the sanguineous temperament.

Such men I knew at College—men who were said, when at school, to have studied all play hours, and who at College walked on the tow-path of the river, while others spirted along in skiffs and out-riggers—men who never took active exercise, only a solemn "constitutional" round the park, or Christ-Church Walk—men whose energies were barely enough for work, with none to spare for play. With men of this character, a training college, so reasonable in theory, may have no disadvantages in practice. Persons who can read any book but the book of nature, who have no eyes for anything but letterpress, and never will study man in the original, such students may as well fly from the broad light of day to a college as to their private studies. But, for my own part, I cannot regret that I was otherwise employed. We have but a partial view of human nature while at college, and there is on the part of society a general conspiracy to blind our eyes to things as they are from the hour we enter the Church, for it is almost conventional to address the clergy in a falsetto tone, and with an affected puritanism of topics and of sentiments; but as to that world, of which the clergy are proverbially ignorant, the only truthful glimpse—the only honest view by daylight we can ever hope to see, is in general society, between College and Holy Orders.

Believing that in this brief twilight of my existence I had the faculty of observation, I cannot regret that I was not doomed to study that Bowdler edition of man, too often to be found in a collegiate institution or in a cathedral city. As to being taught to write sermons, of all men in this mortal world, the clergy are the last to teach it. The coachman aforesaid, the keeper, the Dissenter, the cottager, ay, and the casual remarks of the squire and his wife and daughters—all these persons have given me useful hints for sermons; but as to my clerical brethren—I freely

acknowledge I have not been always innocent of the faults I impute to others, when I say it—their indigestible abstractions, their uninteresting choice of topics, their frigid latinisms, their balanced sentences, and, sometimes, their stilted baby-isms and tesselated English—in short, that libel on all scholar-like language, so aptly called by old Edwards "pulpit," or "parsons' English," this style a Training College has, I fear, a tendency to stereotype. I say, tendency. Happy should I be to hear that such tendencies are counteracted, and that the students not only "write sermons under correction," but that they are sent to the wayside to learn their mother-tongue.

My youthful friends, if you cannot afford this new preparation for the Church, remember it is your own fault if you do not find a fair field of observation and practice around your own homes. But, if some pious and loving Aunt Charlotte should arrange to provide you with a course of pastoral theology at a Training College, by all means beware of that crust of prejudice, and that sectional view of things, which is almost inseparable from clerical societies.

The prejudices of clerical societies? Yes. But if I so speak, it is not fair that any one should consider me as a traitor to my order; for every other class of men has its prejudices too. Have we not seen learned and enlightened judges clinging to the hangman's rope, or to Chancery abuses? Have we not seen men of science as physicians, as desirous to take blood out of their patients as their successors would be to put more blood in? Surely, then, my friends may admit that the fogs and mists of this mortal sphere are not likely to spare the vision of the clergy alone. More than once have I seen a well-meaning rector persevering in a course which every plain man in the parish knew would offend half the congregation, and end in nothing after all! And why? Simply because the clergyman often moves in one narrow circle of people, who reflect his opinions or flatter his weakness; while he, poor man! supposes that this clerical clique is a fair sample of the feelings and opinions of the world at large.

But there is another reason why a Training College would not have agreed with my case and constitution.

Some men are younger in character than others, and I am speaking as one who—as regards a family-man's look and a middle-aged gentleman's regulation step—was rather a backward child. And most vehemently do I protest against the absurdity that would squeeze the starting muscles and the restless energies of a brawny, florid-complexioned man, as I was, into the Procrustean crib of my lath-and-plaster friend Winsley, whose blood scarcely trickled

through his veins at two knots an hour. It is in vain to shut your eyes to physical facts. We cannot fill our parishes with some 17,000 young men, all of the sober serious cast, which older and world-weary men naturally exhibit. It is dangerous to force or thwart youthful and buoyant natures; you only make them grow awry, and throw out suckers in the shape of *isms*.

Henry Dolby was a case in point. I think I see Dolby at this moment coming into my rooms at Baliol—his waistcoat bursting with his wide-expanding chest, his eyes sparkling, as if a merry sprite were laughing out of each of them, and all his muscles quivering to be at something. Yes, Dolby, I think I can see you now hitting furiously on the Bullingdon Cricket-ground, or exulting in the racing-boat, or taking headers into Sandford Lasher. In every party your voice was loudest, and always in the opposition: in-doors or out, you liked to pull against the stream. Now, you would have been a rare man for a Training College, certainly! you wanted age and "keeping," and time to work off nature's fermentation; and you ought never to have been ordained, even at twenty-three: nor must we forget that a Training College does, in effect, begin clerical life earlier still.

"Have you heard of Dolby?" inquired some old college friend several years after college days. "He is levelling his churchyard; he is setting up crosses; he is declaring war against churchwardens' whitewash; he is restoring to their ancestral seats a heap of rubbish disinterred from the belfry, while his sexton claims it for the marine-store shop. What can it all mean?"—"Mean!" replied a shrewd observer, "it means that Harry is himself again; find him some other sphere for his antagonistic spirit and superfluous energies, and you will divert the stream which you cannot hope to stop."

But I must be back to my pupil in the wing-room of Norlands.

Behold there a little boy one side of the table, and a big boy on the other. I was but a boy; I was still growing, still expanding in mind and feeling, if not in body. Behold both the said boys learning, and, in one sense, both cramming. For, the little boy was cramming Homer and Cicero; the big boy, the Bible and Church History. His object was to squeeze into Eton, and mine to pass the no-less apprehended examination of a Bishop's Chaplain. Yes, that examination was indeed apprehended; the very thought of it made me nervous. I inquired for recent examination-papers of all my friends. Every paper I received made me feel how much there was which I did not know; and—who ever

saw an examination-paper without feeling the same humiliating sensation?

One day, I was alarmed and made to study most desperately at seeing this question: "Give a list of the kings of Israel and of Judah." "Name the Judges, and the principal events in the life of each." "Bless me," I thought, "here is an examination for the first morning in a Bishop's palace!" My friend Alton happened to call on that morning, and I told him that really I had a great deal to read: for, the questions were most appalling; and no sooner had I mastered the set from one Bishop's examination, than the next set of questions seemed to sow more dragons' teeth ready to destroy me. "Yes," he said, "every Bishop's Chaplain has his own crotchets and his own style of questions; but who is to examine you?" I replied, "As yet I do not know who will examine me."

"Not know, indeed!" said Alton: "then how can you read up to him, if you don't know as much as his name?"

"Read up to him!" I said. "Well, this is college cramming over again."

"Certainly," he replied, "you cannot exhaust all theology; so you must study, not only your books, but your examining chaplain, and make your ideas the counterpart of his. Go West, and you must read up all about Baptismal Regeneration; go East, and you will be tried in the New Testament and Conversion; and my chaplain in the Midland Counties would be greatly prepossessed with a candidate who reflected his own views of Christian Assurance. And this reminds me of John Hawkins, who was plucked at Norwich. John used seriously to ascribe his miscarriage to the fact that *his* chaplain was absent on a wedding-tour—of course, with the Bishop's daughter; bishops' chaplains and bishops' daughters having a very general partiality for each other—and the examining substitute was a plain common-sense man, who said, 'Bible knowledge first and (what men called) doctrines afterwards;' so, poor Hawkins was floored, as he said, in the very A B C of the matter."

Much more conversation followed, and I most wisely determined to know my Bible, if I knew nothing else.

I said, I resolved to know my Bible; indeed, "to get it up." Examinations compel "getting up," though, really, I am ashamed to think of the mechanical modes to which I once thought it necessary to resort. "What is this?" said Lady Oxton, one day as she came into the study to see, as she kindly said, that all my comforts were attended to, and espied some paper pinned to the

wall.—I smiled in a way that encouraged her to look again. "Oh, dear!" she said. "Well, I have heard of 'cramming,' and I suppose this is it. Those kings of Israel and those kings of Judah *vis-à-vis* to one another! It is what I did, when I was a girl, with the kings of England and the kings of France, deeply regretting that no two of them ever came to their throne the same day, to spare my awkward diagonal lines, to keep them better acquainted with each other."

On another occasion, her ladyship was amused with seeing a tabular view of Sacred History, and said, "I see; learning your lessons for the Bishop." She then made some casual observations on a difficult text of Scripture, whereupon I thought very confidently to enlighten her from some of my superficial reading, and I was venturing quite secure and off my guard, because with "only a lady opponent," as I thought, when, to my great confusion, three or four arrows came so pointed from her ample quiver, as Pindar would say, that I saw my danger in an instant.

Lady Oxton had enjoyed singular advantages in her Biblical studies. She had spent happy hours with Wilberforce, and heard from his honeyed lips the deeper truths of that disciple whom Jesus loved. She had passed one "recess" with Canning, and the strong man had laid his throbbing temples as in a Delilah's lap, and told the secret of his strength, and all the fiery passages of the prophets, from which, as from many other poetic sources, he had culled those flowers armed with thorns, the imagery and the energy of his speech. She had made a fireside journey in the footsteps of St. Paul, and had heard from her companion how to this day the Gulf Stream causes the mariner to "fetch a compass," and sail circuitously from Syracuse to Rhegium.

Lady Oxton, indeed, was a most interesting and charming companion. Do not mistake my admiration. Her loveliness consisted, at that time of her life, chiefly in a gentle heart and enthusiastic mind; and all throughout her life men of high degree, in intellect as well as rank, had made offerings to her loveliness; for, the venerable prelate, the prudent statesman, and that citizen of the world, the traveller—the man who had rested for years but on Turkish mats, or in wigwams beneath wide-leaved palms, or in tents in the sandy desert—had all been frequent guests at Norlands, and had vied with each other in enjoying the intellectual sympathies of Lady Oxton. Always of a devotional tone of mind, many a trial—the loss of her dear boy, Sidney; oh, how that overtopped them all! filling her cup, she said, till it could hold no more—had made her cling to her Bible, and read it

with an energy quite unknown to me; and so, gradually, intellectual flowers innumerable had clustered round her Bible from many minds and many lands. And, above all, she had lived through nearly all the phases and experienced all the changes and the phenomena that the great Physician tells us of in the renewal of the soul to its proper health.

There was something so genuine and so generous in this noble lady that the natural pride of the man gave way. I made a clean breast of it; I could not help it. No man would have gained such admission of inferiority from me: but a *Mother*-Confessor, I have already said, could at any time command the *open sesame* of my heart. So I said, "The honest truth is, Lady Oxton, you are ten times better qualified for a Bishop's examination than I am; indeed, I am ashamed to make such an acknowledgment, but I confess——"

"Ashamed!" replied she. "Not ashamed? Why, should I not be the veriest dullard in existence if all my fondness for my Bible and all the interest it derives from so many 'old men eloquent' had not in five-and-twenty years—(I date from the dear Bishop Cranstown's visit)—taught me more than a *boy* like you? Pray excuse me, Mr. Austin; I called my Sidney a boy: yes, and I taught my Sidney Scripture, and as he said, the dear fellow, 'I continually kept a-head of him.' He could never overtake me; 'the larger wheel of a coach might as well try to catch the smaller wheel.' So, I have had much in my life to make the Bible familiar to me. Indeed, the very woods are vocal; I can read 'sermons in stones,' especially in the stones of our Rockwork. You understand technical memory and the effect of association; and some rich counsel—some life's lesson—is sure to recur to me as I roam about the park, and as certain to make me think of happy walks I have had the privilege of enjoying with the great and good in happy days gone by—days never to return."

"And may I venture to look upon Lady Oxton as a kind of Lady Gamaliel?" I replied.

"I would not allow you to set an undue value on my advice; but, to be quite honest, I did wish for an opportunity of telling you what my good friend, Bishop Bolton, said the very day he bid me adieu for the colony.—It so happened that I had expressed my regret that I had never spent my pin-money on a professor and learnt to read the New Testament in Greek. He replied, 'My dear lady, with all regard for exact learning, I can assure you that there is many a reputed Biblical scholar who would gain no

little on the balance by an exchange with you. If I give you a word you can complete the verse; but, too many of our clergy are deep in verbal criticism, with no compendious knowledge of the text. They are also curious about the husk, but never penetrate to the core of the matter.'—He then told me how he exhorted all clergymen to read their Bible like our old granny in the lane—book by book, over and over, till the mind grasps it all at the same time. It is only thus that you can compare Scripture with Scripture; and, with one discursive and rapid glance, see every parallel passage at the same time."

Bishop Bolton was wise. There is no such commentary as the light which Scripture reflects upon itself. As to marginal references, each student should make his own. A critical knowledge of the Greek or Hebrew, to be really valuable, must be preceded by an old granny's familiarity with the text; for he is a poor critic who does not first know the general scope of the matter.

It was easy for me to glean from Lady Oxton's charming conversation some wise lessons—from Bishop Bolton, and other good men whom the world delights to honour. This was all the more easy, because I was already tired of my own theological devices. I had been plodding my weary way with lists of names, and dates, and facts, and genealogies—the very forms and skeleton without the vital principle.

A very cold word, indeed, is that word Theology. Bible-reading is like food to the soul, but a Theologian is a kind of anatomist; he dissects an inveterate heresy in the callous spirit of a surgeon with a rare disease. This anatomy theological, undoubtedly, has its use, only it also has its snares; and the worst snare is this, it is apt to form a habit of scanning the letter in a fit of utter abstraction as to the spirit. For, just as the Bible to a printer is so much type to be set up, so, to many a theologian, it is so much text to tack his notes to.

And, actually, did a lady's arguments first convince you of your error?—"A lady's arguments!" No. But who, like a lady, can touch the chord of early association, and by old, familiar, and household words, call up the ghosts of departed lore, the traditions and first lessons of many a nursery generation? The idea of "Reading my Bible"—how else can I express it?—as Lady Oxton found me, was but a very pale photograph on the tablets of my mind; but, such was the light and warmth she diffused, that the faint picture deepened into clearer lines, till, at last, Divinity and Theology fell into the back-ground, and the identical Bible

which Aunt Charlotte gave me—at the time I said I wished it had been a top!—rose up in judgment against me.

Once more, let me say in self-defence, I am not decrying Bible scholarship; all I mean is, that if you are a Bible critic, and would deepen letters, and chisel out the time-worn texts, do it with the veneration of an Old Mortality among the tombs of the Covenanters, and not as heartlessly as a parish sexton. For, the man who reads to criticise, himself is out of tune and in no proper frame of mind to appreciate the harmony of anything.

To do that which is called, in good household words, "reading your Bible," is one thing, but to study theology is another. Certain theologians are always "picking at the bark and rind of truth," and cracking the shells of it. Whether the shell is Greek or Hebrew, they go no deeper. Some classical students see in Sophocles only Attic Greek. Some read it for the odds and ends of Greek verses, to be brought in readily for the Porson Prize; but as to the spirit of the poetry, this is what they do not seek, and therefore do not find. Unhappily, many students apply the same desiccating process to the study of the Word of God.

The first book I read from end to end, and held as at one grasp in my mind, was the Prophet Isaiah; and when I knew the outpouring of that heaven-taught spirit so well that I could in ten minutes turn over the sixty-six chapters and feel the whole series of glowing figures, fiery terrors, and rays of distant mercy struggling with the lowering storms of justice, I felt it was a new book. I had never really read Isaiah before. Oh! how fully did I enter into the truth of the poor old bishop's remark—the bishop who was confined for seven years in the Tower of London, with only the plain text of his Bible before him, and cut off from his choice library of commentators: for, he said that no other position could have been so favourable to Bible study. So, I now read whole books at a time, and that from the very Bible of my childish years, and Aunt Charlotte's blessings were not breathed in vain. And this precious volume read indeed I did, book by book; always entire books at a time, when practicable. I read things easy and difficult in one unbroken narrative, and I often found the second page the best commentary on the first.

No sooner was my mind opened to honest Bible reading, than the terrors of my impending examination began to clear away. Before that time, the very name of the Bishop's Chaplain made me nervous, and sounded as ominous as that of the Ordinary of Newgate to a man on a trial for his life. Indeed, tried for my life,

I felt I was to be: for the disgrace of failure would be as bad as death to me: not that I had any reason to fear a failure; only, every man's heart is lighter when an examination is over, however confident of his own proficiency.

Meanwhile time fled apace, and oh, how happily! All was joyous at the time then present; all was bright as the future ever is at the age of twenty-two. The present had the ineffable joys of generous sympathy—of being loved and treated with esteem. Thucydides remarks that this is the only pleasure we can enjoy to the end of life. I can answer for one thing, it is very delightful at the beginning of it. I had labour enough to add piquancy to leisure, duty as salt to my daily bread. As to the dark group of cares and sorrows, throbbing heart and racking brain, which beset, like banditti, every critical turn in the road of this life, over all these horrors Providence had at that time let fall so thick a curtain that I used to bound away, trout-rod in hand, across the park, never doubting that the elasticity of my spirits and the energies of my mind would ever sweep away the fogs and mists of this life.

How truly did I then feel, "I have set my nest on high; I never shall be moved." Just then there was nothing to dash my happiness—no taste of bitter in my daily cup, save one; a hollow, sinking, nervous sensation about the lowest button of my waistcoat, which I felt more particularly when thinking of my impending examination. I had felt the same inward qualm up to the time I had rushed away from the door of the Schools, *testamur* in hand, at Oxford; and, I was so simple as to think that this peculiar symptom was limited to examinations, and that when once I had "passed," it would vanish for ever. I need not say that I have felt, like Tityos, the same vulture preying on my vitals on and off ever since: the causes change, but the same gnawing, the same aching void, the same unrest continues, and is ordained, no doubt, to spur this world's weary pilgrim onwards to his journey's end.

I said, time fled fast away. My pupil was soon to leave for Eton, and I must seek some curacy. This I hinted to Lady Oxton. This was a parting that might well prove touching to one who had so truly a noble woman's heart. "Time that boy should go to school" was a thing easy enough for Lord Oxton to say; for, his lordship was a man who had for years been dieted on blue-books, and had so many objects of interest and so many channels for his energies in every part of Her Majesty's dominions,

that there was no painful revulsion, no "rent in nature" with him, as with the tender mother, in having to divert that little rill which meandered nearer home.

Lord Oxton had started in a line of public life which the Order of Mendicants would call "doing the clean and respectable line." He had committed himself to the line philanthropical. For this new walk of public life, honour to the names of Wilberforce and Clarkson! Some men have charity, as some have poetry, in their very souls; others have it only by imitation, or by an acquired taste, as liking rather the accidentals than the essence of it. Some honour is due to these men also; and so it has come to pass that now-a-days philanthropy is the fashion, and, being the fashion, it is practised not the less honourably by men of kind hearts, because it is also practised by other men of no heart at all. Nay, rather, when good examples are followed from fancy and imitation, it shows how mercies are multiplied, and how blessed are the seeds that the great and good have had the privilege to sow. Many a nobleman, who, twenty years ago, would have spent his thousands upon a pack of hounds, for the style of the thing, however little a sportsman at heart, now builds model-cottages instead of a dog-kennel, and fills parish schools with children instead of the county gaols with poachers.

This was the bent of Lord Oxton, though his constitution happened to take it by infection rather than in the natural way; and the result was, that Lady Oxton and her son could now claim only a fractional part in his lordship's interest and attention. For, besides poor governesses, needlewomen, and factory children, he was quite an enthusiast in schemes for checking the felony of England, and believed they could be taught piety where their prayers were all entered in a "book of conduct," as also honesty with nothing to steal, sobriety with nothing to drink, and industry with nothing to do—forgetting that he spent as much money without reclaiming some ten old thieves, as would have kept a hundred boys in the ways of honesty.

Lady Oxton found little sympathy in such a lord. He was a very correct man, a very straightforward man, and quite a practical and common-sense man; but there was no imagination in him, no poetry, no love, no RELIGION.

No religion! What, didn't he set a proper example to his tenantry, and go to church?

Yes; this is exactly what he did. He did go to church; and he did it as an example. He believed "this sort of thing did good," that it "upheld the institutions of the country," that "rich and

poor worshipping together" was a very excellent custom; otherwise, he would say, all society was a rope of sand.

Still, Lord Oxton had no veneration—no religion, in the true sense of the word. So his poor lady experienced no response to her feelings. She found him a "negative," or a non-conductor: the genial waters of her soul could not fertilise him—he was as a dry and thirsty land. These things *were foolishness* to him. He was quite the kind of man intended by Dr. Johnson when he said, "I would pity a man who had no sense of piety, just as a man who had no ear for music." The melody of Lady Oxton's fervent and harmonious soul fell dull and senseless on her lord. I could imagine it freezing in icicles on that bleak and chilly heart.

The stream of affection—certainly the full flow of a woman's heart—will find or fret itself a channel. Young Reginald was, therefore, almost the sole object of that dear mother's love. So, well might she feel a pang at the thought that he now would turn into the Eton boy—would be seen but in the holidays—would go from Eton to Oxford, and thence into the world; and, to end all, would be gulfed, perhaps, in some *mariage à la mode* with one who would name his fond mother only to ridicule her tenderness and love.

Lady Oxton, I said, was not without some friendly interest in me, partly from association with her departed Sidney, and partly from the interest I evinced in certain sentiments which she never could express without discouragement to his Lordship.

Matrimony! How strange a dispensation seems conveyed in that momentous word, if we only consider, that of twenty couples that are paired, very often not one is matched. How many are the ties which, morally and intellectually, resemble those of the cruel Mezentius in Virgil, who chained the living to the dead! Not a few couples do we see dragging along the road of life like two pointer dogs, each pulling a different way, yet going on still. Evidently, it never was intended that all the good people should come together, but rather that, on a principle of compensation, one should be the complement to the shortcomings of the other. Lady Oxton was in every habit as different from her Lord as a bird from a fish: there was a contrast in every line and movement. I could as readily imagine a happy union between a shorn lamb and a hedgehog, or, say, the steel-clad knight and the Queen of Beauty.

Such being my admiration for this noble lady, and such the interest, and I may say the compassion that I felt for her isolated existence, it was well—since "pity is akin to love"—that her

dignity held in awe those romantic feelings which are rarely wanting to any youthful and generous heart.

Indeed, I have not much doubt that I owe no little to this noble lady. Nothing is more improving to a man, young and ductile as I then was, than the commanding and the overpowering influence of a high-souled woman. Besides, there were no eligible young ladies about Norlands, and any choice I could have made there would have been a bad one indeed: so, if Lady Oxton had not acted platonically as a kind of condenser of my spare sighs and sympathies, I should perhaps have conjured up in my mind some fair form, endowed it with every grace and virtue, fallen in love with it, and if I also married it, I should soon have awakened to the reality of some Joanish girl, a mendacious compound of crinoline and affectation.

I left Norlands with some handsome addition to my stipulated salary at a time that Lord Oxton was in London, and without any opportunity of taking leave of her Ladyship. I was much disappointed at the time, though now I am old enough to see, that if there were no feelings of interest there were none to express, and if any existed, they were better concealed.

I have since had reason to believe that Lady Oxton could not trust herself to take leave of me, so vividly did she see in me the resemblance to her lamented Sidney.

I never saw her Ladyship again for eight years, except once in the Regent's Park, and then two years had intervened. I thought, but was not sure, she saw me. A strange kind of sensation came over me. I cast a glazed and unconscious look in the direction of the carriage. But whether her Ladyship thought I did not see her — whether she was taken by surprise or had no check-string to stop with, or whether the cares and sorrows of such a life as hers, with new objects of interest and benevolence, had not made my picture dim amidst a mental gallery of others — this I cannot tell, but it left me moody and out of conceit with myself for some days after.

CHAPTER V.

HOW I FIND A TITLE FOR ORDERS, COLLECT TESTIMONIALS, AND THE DAY IS FIXED—AND HOW THE RECTOR'S WIFE FOUND HERSELF A GENTEEL "MAID-OF-ALL-WORK."

WHERE can be the use of them? "Those tiresome advertisements! Only to fill up the newspaper! Does anybody ever think of reading them?"

This is what most persons have thought as they opened the *Times* in the days of their inexperience. But, if you would know your mistake, step with me into a certain shop in the Strand, and observe that pale and careworn man who has just paid his twopence for one cup of coffee and a sight of those advertising columns. See how he is fingering down each page, to ascertain if there is not any sort of situation that will possibly suit him; he has been brought up to *nothing*, so hopes to find some place where he can "make himself *generally* useful;" or, perhaps, as a plucked Oxonian once said to me, he is looking for something under Government—some appointment in the "Woods and Forests," because he is only fit for *out-of-door work*.

Clerical newspapers now had a new interest for me.

Advertisements, sacred or profane, whether to serve in the Lord's house or to serve in a private family, are equally a dry matter of fact, and often equally ridiculous to read. We find advertised—"*Cook* good," "*Cook* plain," "*Cook* professed," "*Cook* with kitchen-maid—can milk a cow—or wouldn't object to wash at home." But all this has a parallel in "*Curate*, with sole charge" (just like cook to a widower, or where there is no mistress); "*Curate*, views Evangelical," or views like Hooker, *nearly*—this *nearly* I always suspect to be a loophole in case of any question categorical; and sometimes we read "*Curate*, views moderate," or "no extreme views," which generally means extremely ready to adopt any views of any Rector. Sometimes I read of a "*Curacy*, near the sea," or "where duty is light." Of course all this may

provoke a sneer, or a smile; but why a man worn out perhaps by a cure of 5000 souls, or why a man who is too strong-minded to take the chance of a silly Rector's interference, or why a man with delicate lungs, should not severally advertise for something suitable to their respective cases, I cannot understand. Still, my friends, when you do advertise, I would ask you to consider how your advertisement will sound to the vulgar, and to express your wants with care and caution, remembering the blunder of the Irish clergyman who had dropped the mere notes of his sermon—"Lost, by the Rev. Patrick O'Sullivan, his sermon, which can be of no possible use to any one but its owner."

As to clerical advertisements, some few are a scandal to the Church. Granted that a clergyman may follow the windings of a rippling brook, and may write all the better sermons, and see men and things through a medium the more healthful, because he occasionally woos Nature in all the freshness of her new spring fashions, and like good Izaak Walton, "doth dearly love to go a-fishing;" granted that, while he whirls his twelve yards of line around his head, he describes a magic circle, within which no dark phantom of the brain can enter; and, granted that he may piously prefer a curacy where he can enjoy these happy hours—nevertheless, is that any reason he should be so far indifferent to all appearance of evil as to advertise—"Wanted a Curacy near a good trout-stream;" or that he should walk through his parish with a hat swarming with fancy flies?

I soon discovered that a title for orders, a limited charge, where a deacon—unable, of course, to administer the Holy Communion—is eligible, is hard to find; and I am sorry to confess that, in my case, as in many others, some very hard bargains were attempted.

One Rector said at once, "My curacy is only 60*l.* a-year, I allow; here, still, you have the 60*l.* in honest cash; there is no set-off for reading with you for Priest's Orders; there are no pupils to teach into the bargain, and no worn-out furniture to rent at double its proper value." But this Rector was a man in easy circumstances, who thus epitomised the shabby tricks to which, in other cases, I heard men plead—"My poverty but not my will consents."

"'Shabby tricks!' do you say? What an admission! What a reflection on your brother-clergymen!"

Come, let us reason together, my good friend. If clergymen are undoubtedly more generous than other mortals—and this every subscription-list attests, and every beggar, when he sees a white cravat, pays us the compliment to act upon—why am I

recreant in painting clerical infirmities truthfully as they are? With all other servants, it is an axiom that an indispensable security for liberal and upright conduct is such an income as raises a man above temptation. But, a poor parson's honesty is too often exposed to the strain of every decent feeling pulling one way, while conscience edges the other. I happen to have a story to the point. *Ex uno omnia:* from this one case make allowance for all.

The Rev. Edward Hawkins wanted a Curate, and advertised that he "would give a title:" which is as much as to say, very little besides. Sixty pounds a-year the law would compel him to give, but where those sixty pounds were to come from was the difficulty. He commenced life as a Cambridge tutor, with a small and a very fluctuating estate in "reading men." He was once at Lynton in North Devon with a reading-party, and as it was too chilly for bathing, and the streams too low for fishing—after he had run over the gamut of shrimps, donkeys, valley of rocks, and pic-nic parties, till his energies obstinately refused to feed on such insipidities any longer—he chanced to meet with Miss Anna Dorkin, whose father was vainly trying to forget the Stock-Exchange mysteries of Backwardation, Continuation, and Contango, in a straw hat and linen jacket.

Before long these energies aforesaid, "cabined, cribbed, confined" in a romantic breast and narrow lodgings, I can fancy cried out, "Now, here's a chance for us! Some charms the lady has—imagination must oblige us by making up all deficiencies, and there will be something for us to do till October term, at all events."

The reader knows what is coming. We will pass over those anxious days of early courtship, when—the lady fears no proposal—the gentleman fears no acceptance—and the parents fear no provision. Matrimony, they say, is the door that leads deluded couples back to earth; but, before that point is reached, haggling about the settlement has a strong earthly savour, and the lawyer's office, no doubt, helped to settle their love with a cold collation of pence and prudence, and the bodily maintenance and education even of little Hawkinses yet unborn.

The young people thought they could live on anything, if they were only once linked together: but, the old people thought of coals and candles—rent and taxes—soap and soda: and, Mr. Dorkin characteristically maintained that, amidst all the trials of this mortal world, there was no such consolation as con*sols:* so, Edward Hawkins was obliged to wait till his fellowship led to a living.

Half the Fellows in —— College vegetated in the same unsettled

state, the College founders having forgotten that, to promote learned leisure, there is nothing between a marriage-vow on the one hand and a vow of celibacy on the other. It is far better to let a man be married than to let him be only engaged; for, a lady in a man's head is like a pike in a trout-hole, soon making rout of everything else. At last, the living of Haverdill fell to the lot of this faithful lover. It was worth 400*l.* a-year nominally, but netted little more than 300*l.* His wife had another hundred, the proceeds of a settlement of 3000*l.* in the hands of trustees, who were so hard-hearted that neither furniture, doctor's bills, a piano-forte, nor any of the old excuses for selling out part of the capital, could draw forth any other reply than a lawyer's negative, and bill for the same at Christmas.

Time went on, and the expenses of Mr. and Mrs. Hawkins went on too. The first child screwed them tight, the second tighter, the third tightest. Two others followed so fast that the cradle and baby-clothes were never cold. What was to be done? The family would increase, but the income wouldn't. Master Teddy began boy's life with a lively blue jacket and trowsers and bright buttons, the cloth being found by the tailors; but, ever since, he had known nothing but his father's black or pepper-and-salt, threadbare, with the white seams cut out; and the wife once said in my hearing, as she looked at her black silk gown, "This breadth is sacred to the memory of old Ackerley, and this breadth was a second-class funeral, and this was Mrs. Jenkins's hatband—I am quite a Mrs. Undertaker."

But, a periodical supply of some of the last year's fashions from the well-to-do members of her family brightened up the little girls wonderfully. When I see costly material in such positions, I know it is never bought, and soon detect the seams and creases. What with mending at home and making at home, Mrs. Hawkins might have sung the *Song of the Shirt.*

Necessity is proverbially contriving. She observed that the Charity-school wanted needlework, and the elder girls also wanted training. Here was at once a capital plan to save wages; only, it was a plan that caused more labour and more superintendence for the already hard-worked wife. Cheap things are always bad. The cheap nurse might run the baby's head against the door-post. The cheap nurse might let its head hang over on her arm, and once she positively dabbed the little innocent down in the damp mowing grass, "only while she was giving Harry Johnson something for his impudence."

If the poor woman had all the fag of head nurse up-stairs, the

Charity-school official down-stairs, not knowing the duster from the pudding-cloth, added all the anxieties of head cook; and when it was also baking-day or washing-week, her troubles came so thick upon her that the late Miss Anna Dorking found she was actually reduced from the listless belle of Woking Common to a country maid-of-all-work. Never mind, my dear, it cannot be helped, for many another clergyman's wife is a maid-of-all-work too.

The husband also had his troubles: for, besides a daily struggle to make both ends meet, he had also the education of Master Teddy. Master Teddy knew of every wedding and every funeral sooner than his father, and greeted each with equal glee, as auguring one school hour less. In course of time the mother saw that either Teddy must run riot or the parish. The father's nerves could not possibly stand the fret of both: so, he advertised for two things: first, for the son of some nobleman or gentleman to educate with his own—in other words, for a quiet pony to run in harness with a noted kicker—and, secondly, for a curate. Now, supposing the said curate were asked to board and eat out his salary, or supposing he agreed to teach Master Teddy into the bargain, please to say who was to blame? One of the school of Malthus or of Martineau would maintain that he ought to have thought of all this before he had the six children: only, it does seem to me that that Providence which throws a veil over the future hardly designs that man should see so very far beyond. Patience requires a sphere for its exercise in this world as well as prudence, and surely there can be no such discipline as this balancing of duties—no such self-denial as when a good-hearted fellow feels a wife and family checking the hand his generosity would instinctively hold forth.

I had much correspondence before I was promised, as a title, the curacy of Yatton, at 70*l.* a-year. One chance I lost of a curacy at 80*l.*, because I could not declare that I was decidedly Evangelical. The man who had the boldness to make this profession—so truly Pharisaic when made not in admiration of another, as a Simeon or a Cecil, but modestly of one's self—has left an impression never to be erased from my mind. "Next Sunday, my brethren," said the Rector, "I shall introduce to you a minister who will preach the deeper mysteries of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Next Sunday the gentleman did preach—thanks to my friend the under-sheriff for not executing a writ of *capias* on the Saturday—but, on the Monday he was lodged in the debtors' side of Leicester gaol. "Why, surely, you had as much right to

call yourself Evangelical as a scapegrace like him!" said the lawyer. I know now that Evangelical is the admitted name of a party; but the term always seemed to me an unhappy one, as an implied un-Christianising of other persons.

So far I was gradually approaching the momentous hour of Ordination: and, since there are persons who think too little care is taken in making choice of fit persons for that holy office, I would call attention to all the safeguards by which that choice is fenced about.

1st. College testimonials and a B.A. degree were required. This is a twofold evidence of fitness: it showed, first, that some 1500*l.* had been spent in giving me the best of all education; and, secondly, that those who spent it thought me worthy so high a venture.

2dly. Testimonials were required from three clergymen, all beneficed (so of fair standing), and countersigned by their Bishop as men worthy of credit, to the effect that they had severally watched and approved my conduct for three years.

3dly. A *Si quis* was required; that is, a notice duly given in my parish church of my intention to be a candidate for Holy Orders, challenging any person to inform the Bishop of any impediment.

Some persons, no doubt, are impatient to reply, that this wild man at College received testimonials notwithstanding, while all cried "Shame!" But the question is, Who is to blame? Certainly not the Clergy, who thus call for notice of unfit and unworthy persons, but rather the lay members of the Church, who forget the solemn duty of stating the impediments of which they afterwards complain. When any scandal arises in the Church, the cry is, "What are the Bishops about?" Say rather, What are the laity about, in not giving the Bishop information? It were just as sensible to cry, What are the judges about? when a felony is committed.

"And pray how does this system of selection work?" I will join issue on that point. It works wonderfully well. Set down the names of the first twenty clergymen around you, and range them side by side in vertical columns with the first twenty lawyers, doctors, officers, or country gentlemen, and then say if the Church is not filled by the best men in the land. If society is sometimes shocked, how rarely is it shocked by any clerical *faux pas*, considering that not only every Radical paper is trumpet-tongued against us all, but, added to this, Low Church hits every blot in High Church, and High Church is equally "pained to point out" the shortcomings of her erring sister, Low!

But where was I? I remember, I was collecting my papers for the Bishop. "Here's a bit of red tape from your father's secretary," said my mother. "One—two—three. First, College character; secondly, character from three clergymen; and that Mr. Rodwell was himself, though a good man now, no great things at your age. I well remember that. Thirdly, that queer-named paper——"

"My *Si quis*, mother?"

"Well, your *Si quis*. Now don't lose any of them, you careless boy. Put them in this large envelope, and post them without more delay to Mr. Stiles.

"But all this seems so strange to me, I can't believe it. I can hardly fancy you in the pulpit. Why, my dear, only the other day it seems you were in the cradle. I often think of what that impertinent Mrs. Nickson said to our Rector about young Jeffson, whom all the parish had traced up from a baby,—short-coating, breeching, tailed coat, and all:—'Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings with a vengeance, Mr. Rector!' Nurse Parsons said she wished you were to be minister of a parish near home. To hear you the first Sunday, she would walk ten miles. You were such a beautiful baby, she said: and so you were, my dear."

All this is no bad argument for seeking a title far from the place of "your rearings."

At last my papers were duly sent, and acknowledged by the Bishop of——, after some preliminary correspondence with his secretary, and a day was appointed for the candidates to appear before his Lordship for examination.

This was coming to the point, indeed.

"On Sunday, the 16th of March, our dear boy is to take Holy Orders! Goodness me!" said my mother.

"Master Harry'll be a parson afore Easter," echoed Thomas below-stairs.

Every one who came to the back-door, and every one who came to the front—Mrs. Nickson, who dealt in morning gossip, and Dame Pullen, who dealt in eggs and chickens—all felt a splash and a ripple in the stagnant waters of their quiet existence in being the first to hear and the first to tell "a real good bit of news this time."

All this made me doubly nervous. What if, after all, I should be plucked? Horrible! All this parish will be gaping for the news; and, worse and worse, my mother has promised a supper in the kitchen, and tea and muffins at the alms-house, the day her dear boy is announced as ordained!

Dr. Wilson's bands were borrowed as a pattern, and several pairs were made and taught to lie in state in a little book of black silk, lined with white—a present from Ellen Horley; and when my sisters had also finished a black velvet sermon cover, the reality of the momentous life before me more and more vividly broke upon my mind.

Six weeks passed in a kind of intermittent fever of anxious and almost desperate study: "Suppose I should be asked to give the dates of the Epistles?" "Suppose if I should be set, 'Jeremiah, his life and times;' or, perhaps, 'the Journeys of St. Paul,' to trip me up; or, it may be, 'the Temple and its history, from the days of the Tabernacle to the days of Titus?'"—Such were my waking and my noonday thoughts; and what made me yet more nervous was, that every one would talk of my passing as a thing of course, just because Jacob Holden had got ordained with very little brains, and the last curate, who, everybody said, had no brains at all!

Jamque dies aderat—the day came at last. Nervous or not nervous, prepared or not prepared, the tide of Time will rise inexorably, whether we are to sink or swim; and, while I had ever so many an analysis not finished, and ever so many weak points still undefended (what candidate ever yet had not?), I found myself, with five others, in the same anxious state, booked by the same coach for the cathedral town of P——.

CHAPTER VI.

OUR ORDINATION PARTY—TALK AND CHARACTERS, VARIOUS AND ORIGINAL—THE CURATE'S ADVENTURES IN QUEST OF A PROPER TONE OF VOICE—MY FIRST ATTEMPT—THE MODEL OLD MAID.

SOME thirty young men reached P—— on the Wednesday evening, and made, in two divisions, common cause and *table d'hôte* at the inns till the following Monday. Nearly every man had the questions of some late examination, those of P—— being especially creased and worn. One thing greatly reassured us all. Some of the party had been examined the year before for Deacon's orders, and they informed us that the kind and considerate Bishop had remarked that he made a point of forming some opinion of every candidate before he placed him on his list, to obviate anything so painful to a young man and his family as being sent back. Still every man had a story to relate of some pluck of recent occurrence in another diocese. "Why," said Medwyn, "my brother's bishop plucked Ned Tonkin of Brasennose for priest's orders, and Tonkin was by no means a stupid fellow; men of half his sense passed the same time."

"Perhaps that came of taking it too easy," said Currant. "A coach, I always say, is never upset at a steep pitch like Collett's bottom, or at a spinning turn even at the foot of a hill; but you will find it always happens from carelessness on a smooth road."

Matt. Currant was a character. For seven long years he had gone, ay, and often *driven*, between Loughborough and Cambridge—a man of many plucks. He had also been sentenced to three years' probation between College and Holy Orders. At last the Bishop's conscience allowed him, after much inquiry and some lengthened interviews, to say, "I am willing to ordain you to be your father's curate. The old gentleman's infirmities demand a curate; and, as he says, they also endanger your prospects for life if you are not in a position to take the family living."

Neither was it unbecoming a bishop to deem a family living a case in which any capricious refusal of Holy Orders would be the height of injustice. The case is commonly this: Mr. Currant's ancestor had a hundred acres of good land, called Cullingworth. Had he handed Cullingworth down to his heirs, with a square house and stables, Master Matt., good or bad, would have been squire of Cullingworth, without asking leave or license of any one. But the said ancestor built a church on the estate, instead of the supposed square house and stables, and settled the land to maintain a parson for that church; and then he left the Cullingworth estate, with the church, to his family, just as he would have done with no church at all. The only difference was, that Cullingworth thenceforth required not a squire, but a parson; and therefore to refuse to make Matt. a parson, "only because," as he said, "he was the best whip in and out of Cambridge, and got plucked once or twice," was the same in effect as to deprive him of his patrimony. This was a line of argument in which practice had made Matt. pretty perfect. Accordingly, we amused ourselves one evening by drawing him out. He was a pleasant fellow, and he argued very logically that, supposing his great-great-grandfather should have, as it were, "a day rule," and be let for one day out of his ancient prison-house, and supposing that "this fine old English gentleman, all of the olden time," could stand up and plead his own cause with a modern bishop, that then his respected ancestor would probably speak as follows:—

"Now, Mr. Bishop, if our boy Matt. is positively too wild for a proper parson, make the same appear, and I will honestly own that Cullingworth was never meant for him. The fair question is, 'Can you say that Matt. is below the average standard of his day? Can you fill up some 12,000 livings, all with better men than our Matt.?' I think not. But, if the most you can answer is, 'He isn't as good as we could wish him to be, and so you have a fancy to refuse him;' why, then, Mr. Bishop, before I go back to my damp corner in Cullingworth churchyard, let me tell you, small encouragement is there for any gentleman to build churches and endow livings, and ——"

"Well," interrupted Atkins, "if I were the Bishop aforesaid, I should answer my dusty old-fashioned visitor, and say, 'I know an experienced pastor and effective preacher, a better man by far for Cullingworth rectory, though not half so pleasant a fellow to do the honours of Cullingworth Hall, and the cause of the Gospel requires that I should appoint him."

"Then," said Matt., "I should just have answered pretty

quickly through my lanthorn jaws, and said, 'The cause of the Gospel you speak of requires—nothing more so—common honesty; and if I had settled the best land in Cullingworth as a prize for perfect parsons, at a bishop's choice, the case were different. But I had too much sense for that, let alone love for my kith and kin, and I did no such thing. No; I left the lands to my heirs for ever, with the church, as I might have done without one. All I gave you, Mr. Bishop, was a veto on any of my heirs who should prove a bad one,—and don't, pray, put on that veto too strong, with an honest lad like our Matt."

This reply caused no little merriment. Then Acheson observed, "Since livings, then, comprise two things,—a piece of secular, and often private family property, besides a spiritual charge,—certainly, we ought to thank the founders of livings for limiting their estates to such descendants only as could take orders, and not complain because they did not devise these estates to the most deserving of the clergy at large; but had they devised them to the bishops in trust as positive prizes of merit——"

"You think that would have been an improvement, do you?" rejoined Mullens. "I don't; and I lately heard that question so well argued that I am only thankful things remain as they are. Now suppose one of us had a dozen livings to fill up by merit to-morrow, how should we proceed? First of all, we should appoint the best men of our own acquaintance, having more confidence in them than in strangers. These would be few indeed, and some would have livings already. After this we must trust to recommendations and testimonials, when, of course, quiet sterling merit would have a poor chance in jostling with the crowd. Besides, what a premium for eye-service and hypocrisy would this involve! On the principle, *de non apparentibus et non existentibus eadem est ratio*, men's deeds would be done to be seen of bishops. A High-Church diocese would foster High-Church doctrines; a Low-Church diocese would blight all but Low. You would not find the right men in the right places more frequently than at the present, but jealousy and heartburnings would spread like a plague."

I was glad to hear so good an answer to the old remark, that preferment is not, as it should be, awarded solely by merit, in our Church. Some persons indulge in visions of a time when every bishop shall hold every living in his diocese at command, and distribute, without favour or partiality, to the most devoted of the clergy. This, like other Utopian theories, unfortunately, requires not only perfect justice, but universal knowledge.

Preferment by merit comes at last to preferment to apparent,

and perhaps, ostentatious merit. Oh, what a blighting influence would be shed by that temptation "to be seen of men," which such a system would involve! We should learn to act as under the eye of an earthly master only: and every time a living was vacant, or an appointment made, feverish anxiety and heart-burnings would paralyse the industry of all around.

Such a system would be most demoralising to the body of the clergy, and would create an increasing number of those worst of servants, "disappointed men." Many an old naval officer, far from enjoying his pension or half-pay, frets and fumes away his last years in misery and discontent, till his friends are sick of hearing about "mere boys promoted, and his long service forgotten."

Happily, we have no such gall of bitterness in the Church; though, after all, merit is rewarded as often as it would be under any other system. For, the class of men who would catch a bishop's eye—hasty and superficial as one man's glance must be over six or seven hundred parishes—would generally be the least deserving in the whole diocese. I remember an instance in which some influential members of the Evangelical party were so unguarded as to advertise for "a clergyman of decided piety." The man elected they fondly believed, and spoke of, as one too good for this evil world; but two years after, one of his enthusiastic admirers admitted, "The truth is, we have been taken in. He is no better than a canting hypocrite." So, preferment by merit might really be a premium for hypocrisy; or, at all events, for ostentation: and, a bishop would too often have cause to exclaim, with the French statesman, "*J'ai fait un ingrat et mille mécontents.*"

"Well but, Currant," I asked, "did not the Bishop intimate that he knew all about your Cambridge doings: eh?"

"Our Bishop is a regular good one, you may depend upon that, gentlemen," said Currant. "He talked most kindly, and almost brought tears into my eyes. He said, 'Now, Mr. Currant, I am very happy, indeed, to be able to say that I have made up my mind about the general bent of your character. I believe you are one who will feel the full weight of this new and awful responsibility; for, when a man feels like a parent watched on all points by his own children, it is indeed a great help—a providential stimulus to propriety of demeanour and true pastoral conduct.'"

"There he hit the very joint of the matter," said Williamson, who was to be ordained a Priest. "I could not have believed how altered I should feel—what a salutary check and restraint would come over me—as I walked about the parish after the first

Sunday. Really, I felt as if I were voted the sworn pattern of all propriety, and I must be a bad fellow indeed not to act up to it."

Currant.—"Well, and his Lordship said, 'I would advise as to your recreations; for (smiling) I think you used to be fond of —— Yes, I did hear of a coach upset.' 'Then, my Lord,' I said—for, I couldn't stand that for a minute—'you have heard what is not true. It was Bateman of Trinity, and not I, who upset the Monarch that time. I never in my life upset——' 'Never mind, Mr. Currant, my meaning is——' said his Lordship. 'Yes, but, my Lord, I do mind, and I can't help minding,' said I, 'and I should really wish the truth——' 'Well, well,' interrupted the Bishop, 'at all events you used to drive coaches, and I can readily believe you drove very well; for, what is more to the present purpose, you had no little practice I have understood, and——'"

"He had you there, Harry," said Bayford.

"'And now we must study appearances; indeed, appearances are all short-sighted men can judge us by, and there must be nothing seen in us at all ludicrous in the week to mar the holy associations of the Sunday.

"'Your duty is to save souls—*souls!* to turn the sinner from the evil of his ways. Fix your mind on that duty, and all your recreations will assume a clerical—let me call it a professional—form of themselves. I say professional, for this answ ersevery cavil that can be raised about whether this amusement or that is worthy of a clergyman. Lawyers and doctors know they can never command the confidence of clients or of patients without denying themselves everything of an unprofessional appearance. My friend Latham, the surgeon, tells me he must not play his violin in company. Serjeant Talfourd's advancement at the bar, I hear, has suffered even from his literary pursuits. We must be equally wise in our generation, and deny ourselves in all things unprofessional—in all that diminishes our influence. Clergymen with Proprietary Chapels, I blush to admit, have a nicer instinct of things professional—things in tone and keeping with their ministry—than many others.'"

"That they have," said Mullens; "and Hatcham, of that fashionable chapel at Westaway, for which he gave 1500*l.*, said to me, 'I am moped to death for want of shooting and fishing, and something that gives real diversion to the mind. What good does it do a man of my habits to pace from milestone to milestone, with his aching head as full of parish matters as if he stayed at home?

The consequence is, I am obliged periodically to go away: for, my 1500*l.* would be thrown to the winds if I were seen enjoying any field-sports. Men differ as widely from each other as hot-blooded animals differ from cold-blooded. A change in the air moves my blood about in my veins like quicksilver, whereas that poor creature at St. John's Chapel makes one doubt Harvey's theory of the circulation of the blood altogether.'"

"Why didn't he think of that," said Currant, "before he tried the fashionable chapel? In our parish of Cullingworth the people are not so particular. I may shoot and I may fish, with as little observation as walking. My father, in visiting the sick, has often said, "I'll go and shoot you a rabbit for broth, or I'll catch you one or two trout,' quite as a part of parish business; but do you know, I mustn't hunt—no, I mustn't even ride that way to see the hounds throw off. We're so near Melton, and our people have heard such tales of the Melton men and their doings, that I mustn't be mixed up with their company."

"You're right there," said Mullens. "Men should consider what they undertake. Men of studious, sedentary habits, are better suited for town parishes. I do believe, Currant, you are better adapted for Cullingworth than a steady man like Watkins—his head full of differential calculus."

"No question I am without any conceit at all. His deep notions would only puzzle them. Why, there isn't a man in our parish who ever heard of 'Calculus,' except, perhaps, the doctor. You are quite right, Mr. Mullens, about sedentary habits. Some men are more body, some more brains; some can pick up notions in the world at large, by talking to people, by observation, and the like of that. I told my father's curate, this is no place for all your learning. What good do you do studying 'the Fathers?' You had much better study the MOTHERS, and take care of the women and children of the parish."

Mullens.—"Then you are for wayside wisdom—fewer words and more work."

Currant.—"Exactly: that's my line, that is; and others can only get knowledge out of books. These men will do for an educated congregation, and for people used to books and the language of books, but their style would be an unknown tongue down at Cullingworth. But what I was coming to is, that Mr. *Brains* can find exercise in a town—a seedy-looking man can keep up his seedy looks anywhere; but Mr. *Body* can't. I say, only keep me jolly, and I can work. Now, I am to vow, if all goes right on Sunday, to teach the children, and read and look

after the 'sick, poor, and impotent folk' of Cullingworth, and at Cullingworth I can trust myself to do it. I can talk Cullingworth talk, and I know the depth of Cullingworth minds; and I can find my way in all winds and weathers over Cullingworth Common; and, please God, I'll keep my vow, and visit the poor souls like a good, honest, working parson. But then, with all this I must have air and exercise. I should die at a place like Westaway, all in buckram—forced to look all day long as if sitting for the portrait of some old lady's 'blessed minister.'"

Mullens.—"Then let it be granted that Mr. *Body* and Mr. *Brains*—that Matt. Currant and the Rev. T. S——, may all find a suitable sphere in the Church. And now, gentlemen, I propose Mr. Matt. Currant's health, and success to all his good resolutions, and may we all make as good use of our several talents as we hope and believe he will do of his. Many thanks to Mr. Matt. Currant for his good advice to place ourselves where our incitements to hard work are greatest, and our distractions least. A reading man—in Cullingworth, say—might err by what was aptly termed the *insidious dissipation of the study*, and Mr. Matt. Currant might find that he was working against the stream of his nature, instead of with it, in certain towns. I do believe this advice is much needed, and may save us all from some irretrievable mistakes in the serious life before us."

Such was the kind of conversation, always amusing, and often very clever and very edifying, which filled up the hours of breakfast, dinner, and tea, during the four happy but excited days of my examination for Deacon's orders.

Matt. Currant—"the Reverend Matthew" now—I do believe most honestly keeps his vow, and, having settled down in a parish as rude as himself, is as useful in his generation as many a man of more refinement and fewer plucks. What though he seem to us rather rough and unpolished? Put back the clock of time a hundred years, and Matt. is as polished as the best, and so far can do God's work as well. What though he is akin to Friar Tuck, with ruddy cheeks and spirits up to proof? It pleased the Almighty to make him such: so, why give way to the common prejudice that the pale and the cadaverous is the only cast of features becoming to the clergy? Habitual gloom, like sworn celibacy for a devoted ministry, has some show of reason at first thoughts, but nature soon bursts through fictitious bonds, and reminds us that ministers are only men. On this point I dwell, because the cause of the Gospel is injured by the unreasonable expectations formed of the clerical character.

Sir R. Peel wisely remarked, that nothing is gained by treating the clergy as if we expected of them "superhuman zeal and virtue," though instances of self-sacrifice are not wanting; and that the result of denying the clergy all secular interests and even natural feeling, would be "to create a set of lazy, worthless, and cloistered hypocrites."

Yes, hypocrites! Frown on a clergyman for seeming what he is; cut him off from the sympathy of his fellows if he does not wear a look of ten times more sanctity than any layman ever dreams of, and by degrees he will assume a face to suit you, and, ere long, the inner man will learn the deceitfulness of the man without.

But why should you expect perfection in flesh and blood, although the same flesh and blood happens to belong to a minister of the Gospel? Were the ministers of our blessed Lord's own choice and selection faultless?

One contest there is, and one contest there ever will be, never to cease till the grave has closed upon this mortal body. The best Christian warrior is he who perseveres and continues this contest unto the end. Every appetite and every instinct, however indispensable for our very existence in this life, tends to excess, and is in itself a snare. Prudence freezes into Heartlessness; Industry sharpens into Covetousness; and Charity treads upon the heels of Justice. All this is felt by ministers as well as other men. Enough is it if the clergy are more especially on their guard; but how senseless to expect, amidst all the cravings of humanity, such utter apathy that all natural feelings should be strangers to the breast!

We should never forget that hypocrisy is a habit which must naturally result from pursing up our features and "mincing as we go," to suit a standard of propriety tyrannically imposed. An unreasonable demand for piety and perfect virtue, as for other things, will ever stimulate a spurious supply. If you will require more sugar than the grocer can afford, you must expect to have your mouth full of sand.

But, unfortunately, a mistaken public opinion has cut out one mould for all faces clerical, and a jolly Matt. Currant is expected to look as gloomy, he once complained, "as a sympathetic undertaker in a good run of business." Do not suppose I mean that childish levity is consistent with serious duty while duty lasts; but only that we must sometimes let the bow unbend. Even the merry Matt. Currant's instincts have taught him that, and no little to his own surprise.—"You should have seen me," said Matt., "when we

had the typhus and the famine at Cullingworth both at the same time. What with running about from one end of our common to the other, regular bog-trotting, to visit the sick and weighing out charity potatoes between whiles, I had not a laugh belonging to me for three weeks together—I hadn't, really."

Our examination lasted Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. It consisted of papers of questions, to which we wrote answers for the chaplain, and each of us was called out in turn to translate some Greek Testament to the Bishop in his study. This gave his Lordship an opportunity of speaking words in season to each of us. He spoke to me very feelingly of my duty, and impressed the truth that the Apostles were men, not of words, but works—that our Lord "went about doing good," led a life of personal attention, and Christian activity, and usefulness. "And when," said the good Bishop, "I hear so much of controversy and pretended zeal for the clearest shade of truth in words and tenets, and that in men not more strict than their neighbours about truth in practice, I cannot help suspecting the guile of the tempter to indulge intellectual pride, to delude men with the fancy that a keen mind will atone for a dull heart."

This lecture formed one more topic of our after-breakfast discussions. Some of our party represented High Church, and some Low. It may seem satirical to remark it—still, true it is—that any such examination question as "Defend High-Church doctrines," or, "Defend Low-Church doctrines from Scripture, and by common sense," that this would have plucked more than one doughty champion on each side. But never mind. In religion as in politics, if no man were allowed to have any opinion without knowing why or wherefore, country dinner-parties would become yet more stupid than they are.

"I would ask Mr. Mullens," said Currant,—"if I may allude to the good Bishop's advice to Mr. Austin—Don't you allow that there is a deal of pretence about doctrines? Low Church we see looking stiff and cold at High Church, and High Church we see edging away to the other end of the table, for fear of being expected to take a glass of wine with Low; when, all the time, the state of their parishes too often shows they had better both of them mend their manners first and their minds afterwards—too much theory, too little practice!"

To this the whole table agreed; and Mullens, to give a more lively turn to the argument, amused us all by a certain story from Goldsmith's *Citizen of the World* which deserves to be better known.

"A bloated, profligate character, evidently the worse for liquor, was standing under the window of a prison and talking politics with a gaol-bird behind the bars. "Never was such a thing," said the gaol-bird; "our *liberties* are in danger!" "What I's most concerned about," replied the *drunkard with an oath*, "is our blessed religion."

I often think of this story when I hear a proud, overbearing fellow talking Radicalism, or a man, whose whole life is a heresy, quarrelling about orthodoxy.

By the Friday evening we had each been examined by the Bishop, and knew by his manner that we were certain to pass.

"Can I take any message home, gentlemen?" asked the coachman, standing at the inn door, "to say you are safe to have your names in the way-bill, or the like o' that?"

"Yes, coachman," I replied, "if you see my mother, or any of our people about the road, just say that my message is to 'order the muffins,' that's all; they will understand my meaning."

"Oh! I can guess, sir," said the coachman. "You are to give a teatotal treat on the occasion. All right, sir; I'll set the news going."

On the Saturday, after merely a formal examination for half-an-hour to pass away the time, we met in the hall to make the usual subscriptions, under the direction of Mr. Stiles, the Bishop's secretary.

This lawyer was a quizzical-looking man, and as we were all in high spirits some of us looked to see how Currant's risible faculties would be affected. "To subscribe to the Articles am I, Mr. Stiles?" said Matt. "I think I've subscribed enough already. Something like ten shillings a-head did they cost me for tutoring before I was safe to come here."

Whereupon he took the pen from the last candidate, and, having signed the register, he turned round to Harry Hampton, who was to be ordained as chaplain to a lunatic asylum—a strange charge for a beginner, but so it was—and said,—.

"Now, Mr. Lunatics, I'll hand the pen to you next. Your congregation, with their heads shaved, will be extra particular about the Thirty-nine Articles, there is no doubt."

Really his way of saying such things was so natural to the character of an unpolished countryman, that it was very hard not to laugh; but one or two of the party suggested the Bishop might enter the room and be displeased at this merriment, and we ought to remember where we were.

Mr. Stiles then said,—"You will all dine with his Lordship

to-day. At six o'clock, gentlemen, I hope to meet you there. Eleven o'clock to-morrow is the hour of service in *our* Cathedral. Bring your own surplices, if you happ en to have any with you; it is often hard matter to make ours go round."

"How are we to be dressed?" asked one stylish-looking man. "Thin shoes and silk stockings, some one has told me."

"*I* shall put on double-thick soles and worsted stockings," said Mr. Stiles, antithetically. "Bless me, sir! I wouldn't insure your life for a trifle in our office, if you don't take more care of it than that. Why, our Cathedral's one degree colder than an ice-house. Button up, gentlemen, button up warm, by all means. It is very lucky you asked me. You might catch your death o' cold—yes, death o' cold. But, hush! here comes the Bishop, with a book full of good advice: *so*, of course, it is time for *me* to be off!"

The Bishop then entered to deliver his customary address to the Candidates for Holy Orders.

The good Bishop's advice was very plain and practical—about "saving ourselves," and, as a consequence, "them that hear us"—that half our doubts and short-comings arose from the want of personal piety—from not seeking the kingdom of God *first*—from not putting our duty always *first*, for then recreations and all secular interests would fall harmoniously into their proper places. He said that the same was the principle of all effective preaching. When the minister's heart was with his people, when he yearned that they might be saved—then, becoming feelingly sensible of their wants and temptations during the week, the natural result on the Sunday would be a subject well chosen, as also that only eloquence which is worth anything—the spontaneous expression of a heart in true sympathy with the hearer. How precisely was this kind of preaching expressed by the Psalmist:—"My heart was hot within me, and while I was thus musing the fire kindled, and at the last spake I with my tongue!"

I left the hall full of hope and resolution. If any words of man, aided by every hallowed association, could have graven, as with an iron pen, on my rocky heart for ever—or rather, could have written indelibly on the shifting sands of man's wavering mind—those words on that memorable fifteenth day of March, undoubtedly had done so.

We all walked quietly away. Matt. Currant was not one whit less subdued than the rest. As we entered our common room, the first man who approached the easy chair flung himself

listlessly into it; and another seemed, with one consent, to be considered lucky to have been first on the sofa. Even young men feel the nervous effects of long excitement, and that peculiar "creeping down the spine," never more felt, in my recollection, than at that hour, which marked how all our hopes and fears had been wound up to a certain point, and had then been as suddenly unstrung.

Luncheon made us all ourselves again. We then dispersed, and rode or walked to see the country, and to allow our tumultuous feelings time to cool. But first, nearly every man asked about the post-time, and every man had just a few lines he must write, "if it were only to say he would write again to-morrow." Some wrote to their fathers and mothers; and one at least, to my certain knowledge, wrote to a lady fair, increasing, no doubt, her breathless anticipations of snug parsonage, village queen, rural innocence, and all as nice as in Wilkie's pictures. Yes, and two days after more than one started, as he received an answer, superscribed in full with "The Reverend ——." Ay, and I must own, one at least was guilty of the weakness of scribbling his own name with his new dignity attached—as young ladies do when the wedding-cards are ordered—just to see how it would look. All this is very unlike an ideal minister, no doubt: but by no means unlike that mixture of greatness and littleness, of weakness and of strength, that marks the creature man, whom "God made perfect,"—"yet hath he found out many devices."

I walked a circuit of seven or eight miles with a very good man, who had been ordained Deacon the year before, and who now was taking Priest's orders. There was also another candidate like myself. This companion talked with me in a free and sanguine strain of our plans and intentions, presuming—as all such plans do presume—that our future parishioners were mounted on patent castors, and could be pushed about anywhere; and we invested all our unknown parishioners—as parents their unborn children—with all the ways and feelings we wished them to have.

While we were going on creating a little world of our own, our more experienced friend kept dropping hints, we should find it hard to people it. Our plans for schools he qualified by mention of bird-keeping to abstract the boys, and baby-minding to divert the girls. Then, our idea that we could assign such and such hours for house-to-house visiting was met with suggestions of cottage habits—of women washing in the morning, and men tired and hungry from the plough in the evening. "You'll learn

their habits by degrees," he said; "little can be done without considering them. A young curate next parish to me could not understand that milking cows was not a mere excuse for Sabbath-breaking, and asked the farmer if the women couldn't just as well put off the milking to the Monday? 'That would be a very bad job for the cows,' said Farmer Wyatt."

By six o'clock we were all assembled in the Bishop's drawing-room. As for a Bishop's wife and family, and the idea of dining with a Bishop, these incidents of his mortal state seemed to take me by surprise. I did not know what to expect, and said as much to Currant. Matt. being born with that part of his skull which should swell with the bump of veneration about as smooth as your hand, and who was innocent of all kind of sentiment, replied, "Ay, I understand you; you've never seen a live Bishop, you mean: but now there's a good opportunity for you; for I quite agree with Mr. Wombwell, that there is 'nothing like feeding-time, gentlemen, for animals of all sorts, to see them as they are.'"

But I, on the contrary, had always felt a distant awe of so sacred a character. I had, in childhood, seen one in pure white marble, and had connected it with the angels of the seven churches. But fancy must yield to fact, and I must say that a dinner of many courses, taking glasses of wine with his Lordship, and peeling hot chestnuts, would disenchant us as soon as anything.

Arrived at the palace, a mortal footman below-stairs passed me on to an equally mortal footman up, and I was taken by the hand by a good, easy-mannered, elderly gentleman, with a silk apron, who began talking of the fatigues of the examination and the country walks we had explored. Here was evidently a good Christian man—a purer vessel for the heavenly treasure could hardly be supposed of "earth;" but still I felt a transient feeling of disappointment—though reflection soon scattered it to the winds—to find it was earthy still. His Lordship had several daughters: one was the wife of the Chaplain, and some one was inquiring after her baby. All these daughters wore stiffening, extra gathers, ornaments, and all the killing implements of man-slaughter found in the armoury of other ladies. Little tubby Mr. Stiles was standing like a china jar in the middle of the bow-window, and was surmounting the usual difficulties of one conscious that he is not quite "drawing-room company," by passing away the time with the Bishop's sons.

Two fine boys, from Rugby, were describing to the man of

law the netting of a rabbit-warren, and were asking whether "the governor" would be above letting them have a crack at the rooks which were cawing in those old and sacerdotal elms. Then, the piano and music-books, tidies on the ottomans, a dish of visiting-cards, a chess-table, and all the usual appliances of a gentleman's house, made me think, "Why, this is only like Norlands!—taste, etiquette, and such sublunary trifles are here considered, neither more nor less—and why not?" Men of refinement naturally live as such.

The ladies did not dine with us. His Lordship carried on a general conversation with some seven or eight who sat near him. Those in the middle of the table radiated towards the Chaplain; and thus, between the greater fountain of honour and the less, some twenty men enjoyed that flattering excitement and that pleasing sense of self-importance for which so many endure hot rooms and headaches, under the name and notion of "genteel society," though utterly incapable of much enjoyment.

Matt. Currant and a few others, who were very well aware that they had no odds and ends from Church Magazines to venture sententiously like the gentleman aforesaid, clustered round Mr. Stiles, who was carving at the bottom of the table. This little coterie drank, *sotto voce*, toasts of their own, voting Mr. Stiles the exact representative of Church and State, or a *mixta persona*, both lay and ecclesiastical. After a while, a rather too jovial laugh was heard from this little party; it numbered about four in all. We must not be too censorious; four rather thoughtless fellows out of thirty we can allow in this world of sin and foibles. This laugh made the Chaplain and men of better taste cast admonitory glances down the table, to make them remember where they were. Then "all was hushed:" but, before we went to bed, we heard what caused the merriment. Matt. had made an amusing riddle in honour of Mr. Stiles—"Why was Mr. Stiles," he asked, "like an amphibious animal?" and the answer was, "Because he not only did well on the land, but made a capital living out of the *see*."

However, this was an exception; the conversation generally was good and edifying. The Bishop being properly "given to hospitality," invited us to a plain but excellent dinner, showing refinement without waste; at the same time, both in the drawing-room and at table, his conversation was well chosen, and he seemed to give us all credit for being in earnest, and left nothing unsaid which could inform or encourage us.

We were not long at table. More words in season were

spoken in the drawing-room, and then Mr. Stiles gave a hint that we were expected to retire early, in order as he implied, with winks and shrugs strangely out of tone with the solemnity of the idea to be conveyed, "to have time to get serious against to-morrow."

Every one would hope and presume that there never in our lives was a night of prayer like that night, which preceded "our taking upon ourselves the office and ministration to serve God, for the promoting of His glory and the edifying of His people." But there are times when prayer is little better than a wish to pray. There are times when, though it be the most critical period of a man's life, he stands wondering that he cannot realise his position, and that, gather up as he will all the pieces of the solemn picture into the kaleidoscope of his mind, still the impressions on his feelings are but the faintest shadow of the scene. So, I doubt not, with others as with myself, the occasion was less impressive than one would suppose. It is not the first moment of death which gives the feeling that some beloved one is gone for ever: the circulation, mental as well as physical, must have time to return before the sufferer feels the anguish of his wound. So perhaps it was on this principle that the solemnity of Holy Orders rather grew upon me than came at once.

A most unsympathising and methodical old gentleman is Father Time. Sanguine though our hopes, and however reluctant our fears of any coming event, the same jog-trot pace he goes, and not one moment's respite does he grant, whether the morning bell is to toll at St. Sepulchre's for a felon's death, or to ring for a wedding at Hanover Square.

Even so the solemn morning broke at last. Time and place, 7 A.M. Inn bed-room, No. 11. "Boots," with clothes on his arm, is standing at the door; and so I awake. Is it a dream? No. Yesterday there really was a party at the Bishop's. Those white colours dangling from the looking-glass are the neatly-pressed bands my dear mother hemmed for me, and this is really the day of Ordination.

How strange is the feeling of first waking to any critical and anxious change! To awake on a fine bright morning to a day of promised pleasure, has a joyous thrill peculiarly its own. But, oh! how sad to awake to a sense of grief and pain—to find, as it were, a dark group of cares and sorrows awake before you, hovering around your restless bed, and ready, like the gaolers of the condemned, silently to remind you that you are theirs—that it is indeed no dream—that some heart-wrenching day has come—that

the spirit of some loved one did really depart last night, or perhaps (more agitating still), that you have hopeless inquiries to renew this morning!

Such waking hours we all have known in days of sorrow. But, I remember waking on my wedding-day and feeling, "Well, there is no messenger to put me off—the day is truly come at last. For weal or for woe, to all I fondly promise myself; to another Lady Oxton in her girlhood, or to Joe Jefson's 'dish of bitter herbs,' as he says, 'at breakfast, dinner, and tea throughout life.' I am now to commit myself. The only drawback is that named in Horace, '*vestigia nulla retrorsum*,' because 'when done it is done;' for the estate of matrimony is quite upon the rat-trap principle—very easy going one way, but next to impossible to go the other."

Akin to this were my feelings on this morning of my Ordination. How little did I feel in my own eyes! What was I to undertake! How great the calling. How sorry and insignificant the servant! To pretend to any kind of office above your proved ability is great presumption: if so, what is it to step forward into the advanced rank of those who should be patterns of every Christian virtue? "Can I keep this solemn vow?" Time alone can tell me. Yet, this day I am to venture—venture all—yes, *all*—my peace on earth and my ——

Reader, if you expect to be admitted to my inmost thoughts, and to read anything like the words in which those thoughts fly, spark-like, upwards;—or, indeed, if you have taken your ideas of piety so much from certain novels, in which holy texts seem larded *quantum suff.*—like woodcuts to meet the wishes of "the trade," and "find a lively sale;" and if you suppose a poor sinner's sense of weakness finds relief only in words articulate, or in any words he thinks of afterwards—you little know the heart of man. And here let me tell you, once for all, my soul abhors—I hope it is no unhealthy sign—as a thing the most indecent and indelicate, that uncovering of our moral nakedness, and that gloating over the sacred experiences of our inmost nature, too common in personal histories of a certain class. And therefore, when on this Sunday morning I came down to breakfast, I did not tell any one, nor did any one tell me, how they had severally prepared for that holy rite, which formed so great a crisis in the lives of all of us.

The first person who broke silence was Matt. Currant.

"This would be a deadly-lively breakfast party, I'm bold to say, Mr. Austin, if it were not for me, though I am not half up to

the mark myself; and now, no one has had the presence of mind to order the hinder legs of that fine turkey to be grilled—not half an appetite any of us! I know you'll hardly believe me, but I've done nothing else but feel a creepy sensation this last half-hour, and I have exactly the same sort of all-overishness, without making out why or wherefore, that I felt the morning my dear old mother was buried. It can't be that I'm afraid of anything—no being plucked, or the like of that—but, I feel ten times queerer than I did before the Examination, when, with bad luck, I might have been sent home to Cullingworth by Pearson's coach to set all the parish gossiping about the dunce I was!"

Of course, rough fellows like Currant are not the less subject to all the qualms and quiverings of the nervous system, neither do they feel the less ludicrously ignorant of the philosophy of their feelings. I was present at Matt.'s wedding three years after. He had the same "all-overishness," I suppose, then; for, during the ceremony he cried like a child: neither was this the only case in which I have seen Dame Nature make a big lusty fellow feel ashamed of his weakness.

The way a flood of feeling overpowers a strong man on such critical occasions, without the least expectation on his own part, is among the mysteries of our nature. It is like a seizure or blow from some power without. It seems a proof that certain positions touch the chord of certain feelings perhaps never called forth before. I have often wondered whether there may not be "a murderer's feeling,"—that is, a new sensation suddenly developed to paralyse the man who dares break into the house of life. But, be this as it may, on this most momentous occasion there was evidently a peculiar feeling and a potent spell that bound us all.

On all exciting occasions, our feelings seem so important to ourselves that we naturally expect every one around will sympathise and feel the same. But who is there that has not found, at such moments, the indifference of others jar upon his own excited feelings? So, at the anxious moment in question, the boots and the waiter bustled in and out of the room as we were putting on our bands and preparing for the Cathedral; and the waiter asked, "What the gentlemen would have to take after Ordination?" and even told us authoritatively what time we "should be out," explaining that it was likely *he* should know a little about it; for "hundreds of gents had been ordained out of the King's Head."

When any critical event is pending, there is with most of us a

superstitious feeling that it cannot be—we cannot realise it, and something must happen to prevent it. And yet, when the same event has taken place, there proves to be a degree of routine and common-place in the matter which strangely contrasts with all our anticipations. More than one of our party betrayed this prevailing sentiment by remarking, "Very like reality!" "The hour is come at last, though I can scarcely believe it." And, just as the old man—so as a child I fancied—shut up in that high grey tower moved his long and picked finger inexorably over the dial, I was drawn quite passive by the potent spell of circumstances to shape my course to that dire magician's silent bidding, and was carried with the stream into the ancient cathedral of P——.

The first thing that roused me from my reverie was that we all crowded round one of the vergers, who looked at first as if he were heavily laden with large arrears of household linen under his arm, to be handed over for a three-weeks' wash.

"The cleaner ones will soon be gone," whispered the experienced Mr. Mullens.

"I hope the wine agreed with you," said Mr. Stiles, who then came up, with his little turtle-like head emerging from the ample collar of a thick greatcoat—"Very cold—told you so—wrapped up, I hope, all of you? Come to my house, round the cloisters, after service. I shall have a jug of something hot—that's a regular thing. I have your Letters of Orders all ready to show your friends there is no mistake. I hope Mr. Currant's well."

If this little touch of earth served to break the spell that entranced my mind—if some of these precious moments, attending Holy Orders, were thus squandered on one of those mere six-and-eightpenny officials, who are generally thought to take a pretty strict tithe of holy things, the next minute I was so far secularised as to find myself almost scrambling, in my eagerness for an early pick, amongst those dirty surplices.

"Dirty, indeed! You don't say dirty?"—All I mean is, that, judged by the standard of a decent parlour-maid's apron, there wasn't one clean. The Tractarians go sometimes too far, I allow, in their anxiety, lest in our churches, what meets the eye should break the charm which fills the ear; still, it was high time some party made a stand against dirty linen at the Communion-table, greasy altar-cloths, hassocks half-disembowelled, and a race of clerks, and other attendants on solemn services, who had become a very by-word for all that is ignorant and grotesque. However, deeply regretting that I did not bring a surplice with me—my

dear mother would have ironed and smoothed one like satin with her own hands, I am very sure—I put on the best I could find, and was soon—thanks to the tracery of those vaulted aisles, the deep-toned organ, and all the hallowed associations of the Cathedral—in a frame of thought and feeling more in unison with the occasion.

The Ordination Service is after this manner:—

First of all the Chaplain addresses the Bishop sitting by the Communion-table, and says:—

"Reverend Father in God, I present unto you these persons present to be admitted Deacons."

Then the Bishop says:—

"Take heed that the persons, whom ye present unto us, be apt and meet for their learning and godly conversation, to exercise their ministry duly to the honour of God, and to the edifying of His Church."

And then the Chaplain answers, "I have inquired of them, and also examined them, and believe them so to be."

And here my thoughts recurred to my own unworthiness. A man must be worthless indeed who did not feel humbled at such a presentation.

The Bishop, on receiving this assurance from the Chaplain, appeals to the people solemnly, "in the name of God," to come forth, "if there be any that knoweth any impediment or notable crime" in any of the persons so presented.

Then, if there is no one to forbid these holy banns, the service proceeds in the usual form.

That nothing may be wanting to mark the spirit of intense earnestness which pervades the Ordination Service, the congregation is, at one part, called upon to offer up their secret prayers; and silence is preserved for several minutes, to enable every heart to pour forth its several petitions to Almighty God, to grant us strength and power to perform all these things which are vowed and promised by the candidates.

Add to this, the observance of these "old-fashioned Ember days" did positively cause, not only in England, but throughout Christendom, voices innumerable to offer up prayers for us,—yes, even for Henry Austin himself.

Thousands upon thousands have lived and died without reflecting how mighty is the machinery of our Church for striking one chord of simultaneous prayer. But, stand on the heights of Malvern, and count the many village spires—some clear and distinct in the open plain, some just peeping through the trees, or

half-embosomed in their quiet dells — and try to realise that, from every other height of England, you may descry more village spires as the natural features of our English landscape.

And, if so, consider that, at every one of those village churches from which they rise, the ear of Omnipotence might have heard a prayer for us, saying, "To those which shall be ordained to any holy function send thy grace and heavenly benediction." Ay, and in our distant colonies, in the backwoods of Canada, and the wilds of Australia and New Zealand — wherever the lonely colonist clings to his Prayer-book as a bond of sympathy and communion with the Church of his childhood, and with those time-honoured stones and long-familiar faces which mingle with the dreams of his log-built hut — even there might have been whispered a prayer for us, "Send thy grace and heavenly benediction." Yes, and move to some sea-washed cliff and see afar those swelling sails, which — outward or homeward bound, some hundreds before sunset — pass between your eye and the horizon; and think that each of these seeming bubbles on the watery plain speaks of a several family of our countrymen cradled in the furrows of the sea; and if so, even there might Christian voices have joined in the same petition, that we — yes, *we*, "might both by our life and doctrine set forth God's glory, and set forward the salvation of all men through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Sum up all the precautions already mentioned as adopted by the English Church to ensure fit persons for the ministry, and say, Can any person devise one additional precaution? Can any one improve on these measures? Surely, if there is a loophole anywhere, it consists not in the measures, but the men. If the clergy are not always as pure and devoted as we could wish to see them, where is the reformation to begin? The first step in the series must precede the second. England must have purer homes to constitute a purer University, to raise the standard of testimonials and of that public opinion that determines the propriety of the clerical character. In other words, the clergy being the cream of the laity, you cannot improve your cream any faster than your milk. The Spartan army was invincible, because the Spartan mothers were strong and noble-hearted. Even so, the Christian mothers, in their nurseries, have more to do with presenting "fit and proper persons" for the Ministry, than all the Bishops in the Church.

To continue my story. The next morning we all dispersed in different directions, like so many radii of a circle, of which this cathedral town was the centre.

Matt. Currant's last was this:—

"Now I've got these Letters of Orders," he said, as he creased down the parchment, "I do not above half know what to do with them."

"Not know what to do with them? Why, show them to your Rector, to be sure," said Edwards.

"Yes, yes, I know all about that. But I was thinking how many times I've thought of the day when I should take them home to my dear mother, and gladden her old heart with the feel of them—*feel* things is all she could do—she could not *see* for years. But there, that can't be," said he, with a sigh, at the same time smoothing his crape hat-band; "she is dead and gone first!"

A happy schoolboy can take home his prize to his mother; but, as to the rewards of later life—the honours of the lawn, the ermine, or the peerage—ask those great men who, swift as the hare, yet untiring as the tortoise, have won at last some envied prize, and they will tell you their reward has come all too late: time has not only spoiled their zest, but laid those who should have blessed them in the grave!

Happily, I was more fortunately situated than poor Currant. Coachman had met my mother walking in the road. Her maternal instincts had suggested that there might possibly be some one on the coach who knew a little of our doings.—"All right, you may depend, ma'am," said coachman. "Every old woman at the Almshouse is to drink Mr. Austin's health in her strongest cup of tea and sugar—that's my message."

So I returned home on the evening of the 19th of March, 18—, to my native village, an object of all that sympathy and cordial greeting which shows a soul of goodness in rude and rugged breasts, awaiting only a congenial touch to call it forth.

On sitting down to dinner I was startled at being called on to say grace. My mother talked incessantly about all the particulars of my examination. My father seemed only to care that the thing was done—a parson at last—in the way of preferment—he would cultivate his electioneering acquaintances more than ever—a fat living might turn up. My mother talked about the blessing my ministry might be to others; my father about "what the boy was to do for himself." My mother would talk enthusiastically about Simeon, and Venn, and Doddridge—all female piety takes a Low-Church form, if left to itself. My father's ecclesiastical biography was chiefly confined to Thwackhum and Parson Adams; and it is only fair to the senior clergy of the present day to remember, that, as to their early advantages, my

father truly represented no small part of that community among which candidates for the ministry were born and bred.

However, I felt all this was wrong. A man surrounded as my father was, by his own acres and a few sleepy neighbours in the country, succeeds as naturally to the prejudices as to the fortune of his forefathers. One day is like another; one night certifieth another; his meals mark the hours, and parish meetings the months. He performs so many diurnal revolutions on his own axis, and then forms another line on the family monument, and another tier in the family vault. But meanwhile his son, perhaps, recognises a higher type of animal existence in some University assistant at the Grammar-school, and encounters—never mind how few or far between—some high-souled companions at College. So, by degrees, he moves in a wider orbit, and, starting in life far ahead of his father, lives to have a son, who also takes the liberty of starting considerably ahead of his father, too.

Never did the generation of sons steal so long a march on their fathers, as they did from twenty to twenty-five years ago. And very probably I was not the only candidate who found all these time-serving sentiments touch a very different chord to that which had so lately responded to the good Bishop's appeal.

We will not dwell long on the kind visits of congratulation that were paid me. Of course all the old servants and villagers,—all who had known me in the nursery, or helped me in bird's-nesting or other boyish adventures, made the usual remarks about the lapse of time, and about the infant as of yesterday having grown to be the teacher of all Bowdon. A few weeks were to pass away before I was expected by the Rector of Yatton. Meanwhile, my father gave our Vicar a hint to request my assistance to read prayers on the following Sunday; and the consequence was, I had a horrible nightmare, fancying—as I have fancied more than twenty times since in some fit of nocturnal indigestion—that I had given out the Lesson, and was vainly turning over the whole Bible to find the place of one of the minor Prophets. However, when Sunday came, what with doubling down leaves, and making marks on the margin, I went through the service without any mistake.

No sooner did old Hoskins, our clerk, come to take off my surplice in the vestry, than I asked if all hadn't gone much as usual?

"They'll be glad o' you here always; pretty many o' them boys as keeps shuffling with their feet, or wishing for the time to be out, sir."

"Why so, Hoskins?"

"Because you did put on sich a pace, sir. Arn't you most tired?"

So the truth came out. Like other novices, I had pitched my voice nowhere, and read as in a room—that is, nearly twice as fast as a man can read if he spaces his words so as to be heard distinctly in a large building. However, many a neighbour lingered behind to tell either me or my father and mother my reading was "very promising,"—a polite way of saying "might be better," I was well aware; for old Hoskins was no flatterer. Indeed, some weeks after he vindicated his sincerity by saying, "It's a deal better now, Mr. Harry; it's not sich a gabble. Besides, you arn't so husky!"

In the course of the week I was talking to old Molly Brown, and she said, "Well, Master Harry, I heard you a Sunday." "Did you, Molly?" I said, inwardly desiring to hear what impression I made. "Yes," she said, "I did; and I did so pity you, Master Harry. You seemed all in a flurry, and you was as white as any *copse*."

And yet, such was my delusion, I thought my performance was unexceptionable.

To read in a church is no easy matter. You are required to use your voice in a manner wholly new. You have to pitch your voice in a certain key, to dwell upon your vowels, and to read much louder than you ever read before. If really natural, you seem artificial; and you must become in a degree artificial to seem natural. Like an actor, you must, till habit forms a second nature, appear to yourself to exaggerate, that you may not sound flat and feeble to your audience.

The adventures of any poor curate in quest of a proper tone of voice would often be amusing indeed. At one time I was told that I was too low: next Sunday this made me thin and wiry. Then I read in a monotone; to avoid which I became uneven, as if trying every note of the gammut by turns. When at last I was settling down into some regular habit, our doctor, who had been reading some paper on elocution, asked me if I happened to have a pretty good stomach; for, he could tell me that I tasked that department not only with my Sunday dinners, but also with my Sunday duty;—in short, I read from my stomach!

Here was another alteration. Then, in altering this, I was alarmed at being told that I read from my throat; and what with bending my chin, and with a stiff cravat, the clerical sore throat must come in no time. Add to this, I was informed ana-

tomically that the roof of the mouth was nature's sounding-board, and that the nostrils were intended to act like the holes of a flute; and that what was called "reading through the nose" was a misnomer, for I really ought to read through my nose: in proof of which, I had only to hold my nose while I read, and I should produce the true conventicle tone at once.

I am only relating a simple fact when I say, that almost every error in the use of my poor lungs, stomach, throat, palate, tongue, teeth, and nasal organ, had their day with me; and rarely do I hear a clergyman read but I recognise one or more of the same blunders.

A common fault in reading is the monotone; and when, as I sometimes hear, there is this drowsiness of tone added to a "drift," or see-saw of measured cadences, at the same time, why then even the old tune of "lullaby, baby," itself cannot be compared to such soothing sounds for rocking the cradle of the hearer's brains.

Reading in a church wants so much breath, you cannot afford to waste any. The labour is so great to vocal organs you cannot afford to tire them needlessly. The voice required is so loud, you cannot afford to lose any of the aids of intonation, articulation, or reverberation. In one word, your lungs, throat, and mouth form one complicated machine, and in reading in a church these organs are applied to a new purpose, almost as different as singing is from talking; and the wisest thing a young curate can do is to take a course of lessons from a good elocution-master.

A benevolent Churchman could hardly spend his money better than in maintaining a clerical reading-master for the benefit of the diocese. Many a clergyman, for want of knowing the benefit he could derive from a course of reading, inflicts a cruel drawl on his congregation, and unnecessary labour on himself. As to the clerical sore throat, the barrister and the speaker are alike free from it. The Dissenting preacher is also comparatively free. It is, for the most part, an orthodox complaint. It comes not from talking, but from reading, and partly from reading badly. Though I would impress that any man may sustain injury if he reads when he has a sore throat.

To show what may be attained by reading lessons, I will read two anecdotes relating to two of the most experienced elocutionists of the day.

1. A certain actor, being indisposed, resolved one night not actually to absent himself, but to deliver his part without exertion. Much to his surprise, he was assured that he never spoke so loud before. From that observation, he discovered the secret of

reading audibly without effort, and (as it was) formed a system of instruction accordingly.

2. In the House of Commons were two brothers. One, from his sonorous voice, was called Bubble; the other, from having scarcely any voice at all, was called Squeak. On one of O'Connell's nights, some ten members were on their legs at once, and the whole House in an uproar; a hundred voices were calling "Order!" but little Squeak's voice was distinctly audible over all. Mr. ——, who was present, struck with the fact that the worst voice in the House of Commons could produce so great an effect, considered the principle on which this effect depended, and shortly after commenced his valuable lessons to the clergy on the management of the voice.

The last fortnight before I was expected at my curacy, my kind and Christian-hearted Aunt Charlotte had arranged I should spend with her. She had bought me a gown of the richest silk, and presented me with some thirty volumes of sermons, "published by request"— of people probably who all meant to be civil, but did not all mean to pay.

This good relation, in the opinion of the family, had lived the life of an invalid martyr. "She had been," said one doctor of the old school, "twice round my shop. I have tried everything upon her."—"It is more than fifteen years," said my sister Fanny, "mamma said I must not have a coloured frock because Aunt Charlotte couldn't possibly hack and cough through the winter."

Aunt thought she had lived a life of mercies. All depends on the way you look at things. She had long since felt as under sentence of death, so every day seemed a merciful respite; like the soldier who reckoned himself dead all over before he went into action, and was thankful for every limb he brought out. Still, she had a thorn in the flesh. Her nerves would twitch and vibrate with the least annoyance, and she would almost frown you from her presence, and ere long as surely call you back, and say how Satan buffeted her. Yet she was aware that, as she was born free from the temptations of the lanes and alleys, this was intended for her trial.

"And isn't it just, Harry?" she once said. "I am born too rich to steal, too refined to drink and be drunken, or to take God's name in vain. So, positively, there would be few commandments I could break — Susan and I alone in this room — but for these sins of the temper and the tongue, added to the secret idols of the heart. And now," she said, "powerless as I am, if I can but

animate you, my dear boy, to be a minister indeed, I feel I shall have done something before I die. I am, I know, but a poor 'old maid,' as your saucy father has often told me. Still, while mothers are occupied with all the cares of the nursery, and have always their minds full of teething, rickets, measles, schooling, and such infantine complaints, I feel it a responsibility in a sister to keep a watchful eye, and, from the abundance of my leisure, to make up for my dear brother's shortcomings.

"Do you know, Harry,"—she continued, in allusion to family losses which she had long been saving money to counteract,—"I knew that blow was coming. I knew it—yes, I knew it by my feelings, just as the falling mercury forebodes the storm. I did, indeed. I knew what all those years of speculation would end in. My brother, you remember, often laughed at me because I didn't understand those horrid figures, that seemed scratched at last so deeply on his anxious brow and pallid cheeks; but God had said, 'Thou shalt not covet,' but live by honest labour: and as I plainly saw God's laws, all England over, set at nought, I thought of the foolish man who built his house upon the sand, and was prepared for the storm, and to see 'great was the fall thereof.'"

Here, this good Christian woman afforded one more proof that things "hidden from the wise and prudent"—things that defy all worldly cunning and calculation—are yet "revealed" to hearts as pure and to instincts as uncorrupted and as healthy as those of "babes."

I have now made my reader acquainted with Aunt Charlotte, and he will not be surprised to hear that she promised to increase my little income at Yatton. She hoped I should not be reduced to take pupils, but should give myself wholly to the ministry. My vocation, she said, was not like any other in this world. A man might be half a doctor or half a lawyer, but he could never be half a minister of Christ. The Apostles appointed seven men of honest report, that they might not serve tables, or, be troubled with charity accounts. She could never forget a sermon she once heard on this text:—

"Ministers," said the preacher, "should resolutely decline all duties which laymen can perform. Set a man over a parish, and give him that single work to do, and you may expect him to discharge it. But, put the same man on school committees, and asylum and hospital committees, or encumber him with public business and improvements of any kind, and you soon distract and secularise the man—you not only divert one-half his efforts, but you really take the soul out of the other half. If the Gospel is

true, it is tremendously true; and a pastor's efficiency depends on giving every one the impression that he devotes himself wholly unto the Lord."

When she heard these words she thought of pupils. If, like St. Paul, I must positively follow some worldly calling not to be chargeable to any, she trusted I should do it as a means to an end; and she hoped to see the day when the affluent would add to the income of their minister, and feel it to be a disgrace to themselves where a rectory was turned into a school.

Here the good woman spoke "as if one inquired of the oracle of God." The Tractarians have broken up, in parts, the ice of selfishness, and had the actual courage to spend sums of money in a cause which has generally been priceless in the theory, but almost penniless in the practice of men. Our Church endowments, like our Poor-laws, are so far blessings, that they have saved thousands from perishing by lack of knowledge as by lack of bread.

But, all these mechanical appliances have one great disadvantage, which all good men must be careful to counteract. I mean, that they deprive certain virtues of their natural sphere and healthy exercise till the said virtues lose the free use of their limbs. We have so long compounded for charity by paying poor rates, that, instead of "Pity the sorrows of a poor old man," the rising generation are taught never to give in *the streets* — without being told how else to give — that "the poor" and "impostor" are convertible terms; and that, instead of a shilling warm from the palm of charity, they should carry tickets; and, worst of all, the poor-law endowments have given lugubrious currency to that frightful word *pauper*, one degree more horrible than *corpse*.

Church endowments and rates are qualified in value, however great their value, by the same infirmity of man — by the same readiness to believe that, because a little is paid all is paid. All poor rates guarantee is, that the people shall not actually starve. All that church rates and endowments guarantee in things spiritual is barely a crumb a-piece for the whole population; but yet these very crumbs have too often been the excuse for withholding our goodly loaves.

For two years, as dean rural, I had the care of five-and-twenty churches, and often complained that no linen was so dirty as church linen, — no furniture so mean and shabby as church furniture, — no Bibles and Prayer-books so tattered and greasy. Let any reflecting tourist visit the churches of England, comparing them with the private houses, and he cannot but ask himself the

question, Why is it that the English people reserve the most dirty, the most beggarly, and the most absurd of all things for — I blush to say it — for the house of prayer? The answer is, the churches are supported by a kind of poor's rate, — compulsion takes all heart out of the matter; and thus the churches, like the poor of England, are placed to a great degree out of the pale of generous or decent feeling.

My sad experience without a church rate will soon show that all I mean is, that we must preserve our Christian liberality while we defend the rate.

Turn from the churches to consider the clergy. Why do a dozen carriages stand at that church-door, their owners seeing their ministers worse paid than their butlers, — toiling without help or relief, and Sunday after Sunday so exhausted by the Liturgy, that the finest sermon, from want of energy, must fall flat and powerless on the ear? Once more, because there is a small endowment, and the laity are born and bred with a notion that, because some are paid all are paid. Ninety-nine men out of a hundred have no more idea of helping the finances of the Church than of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Not so Aunt Charlotte. If the Curate of Blindham were to take pupils it would be no fault of hers. She sent the curate — whoever that curate might be — ten pounds a-year, to increase the value of the Blindham Curacy.

CHAPTER VII.

MY FIRST CURACY — A PARISH AS IN OLDEN TIME — OUR SCHOOLS, SERMONS, DISSENTERS, AND TALK WITH OUR VILLAGE BLACKSMITH.

I NOW took leave of this good Christian lady, and returned home to prepare for my curacy.

I had two days only to spend at home. It was known that my quarters at Yatton would be some farm-house lodging, and my mother and sisters — after much laughter at the idea of my keeping house for myself, ordering my own dinners, counting up my own linen, and seeing to my own mending and sewing buttons on — kindly provided me with a large basket of hams, jams, and grocery, as well as pens, needles, and stationery; and then I was escorted to the coach at the end of the lane by nearly all the family, and really I did feel some indescribable little weakness when I reflected that I could no longer call my father's house my home.

My Rector's servant was waiting with a wheelbarrow at Yatton turnpike; for I had been kindly invited to spend the first night at the Rectory.

No one was at home as I entered the house, so I had some half-an-hour to explore the study, the ground-floor, and the garden, and from his books and "fixings" to form my conjectures of the man. This was no difficult problem. I could read the owner's history in what met my eye. Some school and college books, quite of an elementary kind, showed me he was always a backward child. Books of field-sports, farming and farriery, implied that he was made chiefly for out-of-door occupations, while his theological collection, which was very limited, consisted of "Village Sermons," and "Discourses, Plain and Practical," and "On Fasts and Feast-days" — (all intended for men who never could do their own themes and essays at school) — and comprised also some old 'standard authors,' of which to *stand* on

the shelf is often the principal use. All this showed me that my first Rector would be a man who had as little idea of furnishing his mind, as his house, with the fancies or discoveries of the day.

A newspaper scrap-book, with a few memoranda of things curious, was on the table. As it fell open I read the following letter, and pithy remark:—

"Dear Ned,

"If Black Bess doesn't break my neck, I'll be with you Wednesday.

"Yours,

"A. B."

"*Mem.*—Black Bess *did* break his neck."

While I was ruminating on this symptom of a man of few words the Rector entered, and received me courteously. He was a fine old gentleman, nearly seventy, with a long broad-flapped coat, knee-breeches, and gaiters; and after offering some refreshment he led me into the garden, and, walking to a little eminence, he pointed out the bounds of the parish. He began describing the place and the people; but, for the most part, forgot that I had everything to learn, and alluded to all matters parochial as if I had known them as long as he had.

"You recollect the funeral, please sir?" said his parlour-maid, as we passed the door after about half-an-hour's talk.

"Funeral? Oh, yes! Hannah Winsom's," he replied. "I am glad you reminded me. What was I thinking of!—Here, Sarah, bring a second surplice. Mr. Austin shall make a beginning; but I must read at the grave for old-acquaintance' sake.—Poor Hannah! Now, do you know, Mr. Austin, I shall miss that woman, though only a pauper, more than many a fine lady? I can't pass her door without feeling instinctively for my snuff-box: for, many's the pinch I have put into her 'baccy tin."

The surplice being brought, I was quickening my step towards the church, when he said, "There is no such hurry. They generally stay drinking to the memory of the departed till Isaac goes to say I am coming."

This was my first funeral; and I read the Epistle deeply impressed by this natural and simple way of consigning the worn-out cottager to the grave. Still, while the Rector was reading, "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust," my eye caught some boys "riding cock-horse" on the tombstone, and Isaac shaking his stick at them,—one proof more that the pure

sublime is very rare in this world; the ridiculous in life, as in Hogarth, is never far off.

After dinner Mr. Thomas said:—

"You'll be ready to preach on Sunday afternoon? I shall look out a sermon for the morning. You will dine with me every Sunday, of course. Your landlady, Mother Weston, pretty nearly starved Williamson, one of my curates. Not so much as a rasher of bacon would she dress for him on a Sunday. You must take care not to offend her. There is no other house within miles."

I had not been there one week before I had christened, churched, and married, as well as buried; and having a list of sick persons to visit, and always one, if not two, sermons to write, I found myself in the full routine of clerical duty, almost before I was aware of it.

But it may be needful to enter a little into the ways and ideas of my first Rector, the Rev. Edward Thomas.

Mr. Edward Thomas was a clergyman of a past generation; and, not to be too hard upon him, by the standard of that benighted generation he ought to be judged. Considering the more stirring examples of my day, and the chilling influence of his, our respective talents were as one talent to his stewardship and ten to mine.

We may imagine a Bœotian—a stupefying age, as well as a Bœotian clime. The fogs and mists of prejudice may constitute so heavy an atmosphere, that those who breathe it from the cradle may well claim a little indulgence. Sir Matthew Hale was still a wise man, though he could sit gravely in judgment on a case of witchcraft. The Rev. E. Thomas was not a bad man, although he could not rise superior to the follies of his day.

"Master 's a good Churchman," said Abel Duck (our clerk)—"master is none of your Methody sort—he hasn't changed nothing in the parish: all is exactly as old master left it."

Yes. He found a certain Church system, or machinery standing, and had mechanically kept it going. He had "read prayers" and lessons, and published banns, all in the same tone of voice; and had preached in the same tone, too. And if, seeing every mother's child duly christened, married, and buried, and sending off Farmer Kenton's tax-cart full of comatose rustics triennially for Confirmation,—if this were the whole duty of man, the Rev. E. Thomas had done his part at Yatton.

So soul-less was the course he had found; so soul-less was the course he followed. He had gone on where the former rector had

left off; and there's no knowing how many Yatton rectors had done the same. But there is nothing surprising in this. Even laymen cling convulsively to abuses, and rarely turn over a new leaf till the old one is thumbed past all endurance; and the clergy have far less to make them loose their hold.

The Yatton rectors were, of course, "endowed," just as the Yatton farmers were "protected;" and both rectors and farmers were, for the very same reason, equally slow in adopting any new measures for the care of their respective flocks.

But in these remarks let me not appear insensible of the blessings of endowments. Even such pastors as I am describing were much better than none. As long as endowed rectories, like endowed schools, are kept standing, so long a good minister may come and replace a bad; in other words, as long as the conduits and channels are preserved, they are ready once more to gush forth with living waters, whenever some true man of God appears to bid them flow. I would only impress that all earthly blessings are earthly snares; nor are any blessings more qualified than those of Church endowments; and of this I solemnly adjure all young clergymen to take heed.

Virgil says of farming,—

"Sic omnia fatis
In pejus ruere ac retro sublapsa referri."

That is to say, everything which is left to take its course takes a bad course. Certainly, we may construe *sic omnia fatis* to mean, "nothing without competition is very likely to grow better." And an endowment means "no competition," or "pay for good work, bad work, or scarcely any work at all."

Bad habits and prejudices—a certain *religio loci*, and vested rights to do things wrong—these are as the docks and thistles of the mind; and since rectories, like farm-houses, must alike be tenanted by that wrong-headed creature, man, it follows that endowments with the one, like protection with the other, sadly militate against improvement.

Free trade, I admit, will not apply to the Church. We should, indeed, have a trade, and a very free trade, too. When it is left entirely to the demand to regulate the supply, there may be no demand at all, or such only as shall cause a vicious supply. All this we perfectly admit; but at the same time we must not forget, that when the party who supplies is not quite alive to the nature of the demand, there is little indeed to remind him of his failings.

Now, an endowment amounts to the no-competition, the irresponsible, the monopoly, and, indeed, the take-it-or-leave-it principle—a principle which, to some extent, prevails in public offices, with losses and confusion various; as also in barracks, condemning the poor soldier to pestiferous quarters and insipid food; and, in short, in dockyards, and many other instances.

It is a kind of principle almost certain to spoil or impair everything to which it is applied. Endow tailors' shops, and you would have no new patterns and rarely a coat to fit. Endow bakers' ovens, and the men would argue by the hour that heavy bread was light, or, perhaps, that if people didn't like heavy bread they ought to like it. But when self-interest is affected, men change their views, and become the most accommodating creatures we can imagine. Nay, they compete most ingeniously with each other in adapting their loaves even to the weakest digestion or the loosest teeth: they offer bread, fancy or common; bread, white or brown; bread, crusty or not crusty. So inventive, so considerate, and so obliging, with free competition, is money-making man; but just try him with a certain salary, or endowment, and the same man turns at once pig-headed, or as surly as a bear.

Therefore, my dear Clerical Brethren, you must not suppose that you can, without the utmost care and self-searching, escape those deadening influences which blind the eyes or damp the energies of all other men. How was it that the Rev. John Batt, at the College living of Anley, went on year after year in an unknown tongue, and with learned topics void of interest, distributing, in place of the Bread of Life, something heavy, indeed, and indigestible—like stones to those who asked for bread?

All this was simply because there was not, as with the tradesman, anything to inform Mr. Batt that he was always giving one thing to those who required another. Nothing, did I say? yes, there was one thing, but a thing too little regarded. For, it was once remarked of an eminent counsel, that if he had only looked the jury in the face he would have modified his address and gained a verdict. But, unhappily, many preachers never do look their people in the face, or they would see at a glance that they were talking to the wind.

I say, therefore, my Clerical Brethren, beware of the delusive and blinding influences of an endowment. Seek wisdom, that is, self-knowledge, above gold and precious stones: seek it by prayer, and self-examination. For no men have so little to teach them in their daily walk as you have. No other profession commands,

like yours, that most dangerous of all things in the hands of erring man—irresponsible power. Even public opinion checks you less than other men. "The purity of the Bench," said a learned judge, "is ensured by this;—while sitting in Court to-day we know we shall sit in the newspapers to-morrow." The surgeon, the lawyer, the tradesman, are all wound up to concert-pitch; the patients, the clients, or the customers serve as masters to keep them to their work. Hungry competitors are ever waiting to pounce upon their errors and take their places, like schoolboys up at class. Now, boys learn the pace of their class, fast or slow. Men do the same. Some men will pull actively when matched one against another, though they are very mules in single harness. But a clergyman, however slow by nature, is unfortunately left without any such stimulus to make him fast; and every young clergyman should be emphatically warned of this disadvantage. A clergyman must daily calculate his progress, and study economy of time, punctuality, and business-like habits. He must reflect that he is beset by an insidious temptation, being more his own master than any other man; and must take care lest the blessing of independence should prove in eternity his ruin.

As to doctrine, our independent position is an unqualified blessing indeed; and therefore it has come to pass that our doctrines are to Scripture, "true as the dial to the sun." An endowment alone can ensure that there shall exist no interest at variance with truth. "Those who live to please must please to live," says Johnson; and again, "The stage but echoes back the public voice." The minister of a speculative chapel is too apt to feel his way, and, as it were, to read his sermon off the smiles of his congregation; and, so far, he will resemble, not the seal to stamp an impression on others, but the wax to receive one himself. No, it is not in doctrine: it is in versatility, tact and address—points in which the minister of a proprietary chapel generally beats the parish church—in which an endowment so signally fails.

Suppose, for instance, every parish had its Surgery, as it now has its Rectory-house. As regards pure science, as pure doctrine, this would be excellent: we should never have a dose too much, and always the best of its kind; but then we should have doctors as impatient as Abernethy, and many a fractious patient who now is coaxed into health would be told "to take it or leave it." As it is, a train of hearse and mourning-coaches, with the doctor's carriage looking very guilty in the throng, makes doctors attend a little to results, and also to study not only the nature of the medicine, but the temper of the patient.

But, contrariwise, my poor old Rector never thought of the constitution of his patients at all. Thousands never do. "Mine is orthodox Church-of-England doctrine," he used to say: and so it was, very wholesome medicine, I admit; only his pills were too big to swallow, and his prescriptions were half in Latin: that is to say, they were all in Johnsonian or Pulpit English. Sometimes the style was also flowery; and much good writing is made illegible by superfluous flourish. An ornate or flowery style, in a sermon for the poor, is like painted glass in a church naturally dark; whereas, the first requisite, both in words and windows, is transparency, to let in light.

It must, I think, have been a Yatton parishioner, of whom Southey tells the following story:—

"This is a blessed day—this day of rest, to you, John?" said a country rector to one of the sons of the soil.

"Yes, zur, this be a blessed day. I goes to church; I sits me down; I lays my legs up; and I thinks o' nothing."

Never was there a more graphic picture of the hob-nailed frequenters of Yatton church. Of course, whether you are preaching to a man or only talking to him, there can never be any doubt whether John is really interested or whether he is merely waiting "till our parson has a done."

I am sorry to say anything that may sound severe—though it is best to hold the mirror up to folly for it to see itself—but an idea of the æsthetic and of the orthodox causes numbers to read and preach as if their message were of no possible concern to any one; as if prayers and preaching were a charm—an *opus operatum;* and as if, "when 'twere done 'twere done." Certainly, if any one were to stand out in the road, and with the same tone of voice were to tell the mail-coachman that he was driving headlong into a pit, the man would never think he was in earnest, but would whip on all the faster.

This senseless monotony was practised by some of the old school, out of heedlessness, but by too many of a certain new school out of principle. It seems as if one of the marble figures, after lying for a century on its back, with hands clasped over its breast, had been raised up stiff, cold, and passionless, on to its feet, as a speaking automaton of senseless sounds.—There were some silly fellows at Oxford who used to affect short trousers and black stockings, because Mr. Newman's trousers happened to be short and his stockings black. Even so has the quiet emphasis of the authors of the *Christian Year* and the *Cathedral* been caricatured, instead of copied, by men who could go deeper than

the accidents, or perhaps the errors, of those earnest-minded men.

To return to Yatton. As to the religion of that neglected people—a patch of heathendom in the midst of Christendom—it exemplified what I once read on a tombstone,—"His religion was that by law established." Robert South spoke of people having barely soul enough to keep their bodies from putrefaction. Yatton people wanted their ears syringed that they might hear, and their minds roused that they might apprehend:—all this as preliminary. For the word of God is still a "word." It must first enter into the ear, and then be grasped by the mind, before it can sink into the heart.

The rustic ear is used to bleating of sheep and cawing of rooks, and to a few short sentences shouted across the field, but it is quite unused to the language of books or to connected sentences. As to preaching the word in the usual style to such persons as these, with "secondly, thirdly, and to conclude," anything like pulpit conventionalism was preposterous. They wanted the word, not preached, but driven into them, like the nail of Jael into the temples of Sisera. A Parson Pound-text is the man for such a congregation as this: though, thanks be to the wisdom of God, very few are the texts, when well chosen, which it is necessary to pound. Our blessed Lord taught only one at a time, and a whole parable to enforce but one. Dr. Chalmers recommended that there should be only one principle in one sermon. It is also related of Bishop Blomfield that he once said at an Ordination,—"I would add a word before we part: Don't try to put the whole of Scripture into one discourse."

Imagine my difficulties at Yatton. Somewhat the same as in the wilds of Arabia. How can a Paul plant or an Apollos water, when the ground is yet unbroken for the seed? I have heard much well-intended nonsense talked about education being worse than useless, if religion is not taught in the school. One Home Missionary, at least, at Yatton, would have found his labours materially lightened, had the Yatton ears and Yatton minds been already exercised with reading, arithmetic, and geography. And this, I say, not for the positive use of these things. As to Arithmetic, they could all work fractions of days with the farmer, and check the half-pints chalked up behind the alehouse door. And as to Geography, the two Tuckers had gone very straight to Botany Bay, after stealing old Cottle's sheep. No, it was not for the use but for the exercise. These things are wanted by the pastor to awaken, to galvanize, and open the portals to the soul.

I have known an old granny's Bible laid on the shelf for want of spectacles. I have known a deaf man brought to church by a present of an ear-trumpet. I would, therefore, have greeted a schoolmaster as I would an optician or an aurist, for making way for the word to enter.

I need not be reminded that, in a certain manner, no religion may prove irreligion, and that there is a way of shelving religion with such indifference, that to leave it out of school may endanger leaving it out of life. Still, this cry has been raised in the wrong place, and much blessed food has been kept from starving children by rather a party—than a hearty—cry of "Rank poison."

But, it must not be supposed that there was not some kind of school at Yatton. The master was a poor cripple, and, like many other masters, he kept the school because nothing but a school would keep him. There once was a meeting held to displace him; but mercy prevailed. "Do ye look at his poor legs," said one farmer.

The Spelling-book and Testament served as Delectus and Cæsar with us, and was about as little associated with any religious sentiment. If religion promulgated by the sword is useless, religion taught by the cane is not much better. Still, many a pastor, who has himself smarted through life at the very name of Horace, has allowed the same means to be taken to invest the Bible with the "sighs and groans of his early Britons."

Religious education means, training to love religion; and certainly it is not embodied in anything very lovable as seen by a boy in a parish master. Aristotle wisely said, that a great part of persuasiveness depends on your fancy for the speaker. But a schoolmaster must be a rare man to last prepossessing long. "No cook's temper can stand the kitchen fire," said an old housekeeper, "above three years." All that is sweet in a master commonly turns to vinegar in a much shorter time. You cannot expect whippings and blessings pure and proper from the same man, any more than milk and vinegar from the same vessel. Add to this a heartless way of confusing things sacred and profane—"Slates, boys," "Bibles, boys," "Geography, boys," "Prayers," "'Rithmetic," all bawled down the school or diagrammed upon the wall—or done mechanically. Mechanically? Why I have seen twenty children go plump down on their knees to say their prayers at the word of command! I never could enter this kind of school without feeling, as a certain Government Inspector was so unofficial as to let out, "Thank God, no child of mine is taught religion in this manner!"

Never was there a better heart than that which throbbed under

the brown stuff in winter, and the printed calico in summer, of our Rector's lady, Mrs. Thomas; and when one day she entered the school-room, as her custom was two or three times a-week, and calling, like an old Christian goody, the baby-minders and the bird-keepers round her, leant down her beehive bonnet to impress the story of Joseph and his Brethren, or the Prodigal Son, then I felt how "truth from her lips prevailed with double sway." As she reverently opened the Bible, with subdued tones, in unison with holy things, and with silent finger stilled to a solemn calm the tumultuous spirits in pinafores and fustian, the book itself seemed transformed. It had before been bare "Texts," or "Reading," or "Testament," with the jaded master, but now it was handled feelingly as the "Word of God." She called them "my dears" and "dear children:" and the words of love were more winning from the lips of love.

Then she had a pretty store of Scripture sayings, short and weighty, as plants with goodly roots, or holy bulbs just bursting into life. "God seeth you;" "The darkness is no darkness to Him;" "His eye can pierce your cottage thatch;" "God heareth you; all your wicked words are written in His book. Jesus only can blot them out, or write His perfections over them."

One day the good lady said—and, I should like to know who was father to the thought—"You saw rich Farmer Walter's funeral, did you not, my dears? It was only last fair that he stood among flocks of sheep and droves of oxen, and could walk halfway home across his own broad lands; but when he was let down into the grave, 'Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust,' the three bare handfuls on his coffin-lid told, as in mockery to the richest landlord or the poorest ploughboy, 'we brought nothing into this world, it is certain we can carry nothing out.'"

As I walked home I could not help reflecting that *here* was the great school question solved. Government grants will pay for school-rooms, model desks, and slates and rulers, for black boards and patent chalk; nay, more, it will pay for men and women to moisten the said slates, and to jumble Martin Luther, Cassivelaunus and Thomas à Becket, all up together, in a ludicrous attempt to stow away the sweets of learning, before Billy Binks' carroty-coloured hive is fitted up with cells. It may even turn hypothetical hogsheads into imaginary puncheons, and girdle the whole earth with barleycorns.

Well. Anything is an improvement that tends to break up the fallows of the rustic mind—anything to correct torpidity of brain—anything for a shock of intellectual electricity, and keep

up a healthy circulation in the parish skull. I would hail even a four-horse coach, galloping daily through a country village, as helping to brighten up the parish boys: while the stir and stimulus of a railway, with its busy station and many trains, may do wonders. But, as to religious education with paid masters, however ingeniously ticketed or certificated they may be, we may cease to dispute about it. From the same fountain you cannot have waters both bitter and sweet—you cannot make the same man exhibit the terrors of the Law alternate half-hours with the loving-kindness of the Gospel. No, no. Your master must be chiefly employed to rouse and train, and awaken the dormant intellect, and then the clergyman and Christian men and women must come in and enact the part of Goody Thomas, to kindle from their own celestial fire the flame of piety in the rustic mind. Why, my old master, Dr. Griskin, would never have kindled such a flame in me and my schoolfellows; no, nor five hundred Griskins dotted over all the country. I distinctly remember receiving this impression when I once heard him officiate in church—"Yes, you're a nice one, old boy, to look so meek and mild: but, if these people could only have a peep into our school and see you there—that's all!" No, we had mothers to fan the heavenly spark, and old Griskin simply bore witness to the truth, and left that spark to increase as best it might.

But here let me clearly state that I certainly would employ none but men of Christian character in schools, because "he that is not with" the Gospel "is against" it. And nothing tends more to religious education than the example of church-going men in authority.

The Duke of Wellington at daily service was a standing homily to every man who wore a British uniform. The judges at assize-time, first seeking wisdom of God before sitting to enunciate the laws of man, are also invaluable witnesses to the faith. Every man great in science or in art, all who hold the vulgar mind in awe by piercing the starry heavens above, or laying bare the structure of the earth beneath—above all, every learned society or philosophical association, would do well to inaugurate their meetings by a solemn procession to the house of God.

For, it is in these open demonstrations of religion that we have a ready appeal, and a short and telling argument with the Infidel:—Behold our Shakspeares and our Miltons, Newton and Pascal, Scott and Southey, Burke and Wilberforce—behold in every sphere of genius a cloud of witnesses—see how, in the world of intellect, "all the works of the Lord praise the Lord," and join

with one voice and one mind in the same general assent to Christian truth.

This is why for a schoolmaster we must have a religious man; namely, that religion may not be ignored by his example, however little he may be required to teach it. Still, it will not be by any kind of religious education which paid masters can impart, that we must hope either to empty the county gaol or to fill the parish church. Every school must reserve a quiet corner for the clergyman or for such kind friends as Goody Thomas.

In this village school I spent many an hour during the two years of my Yatton curacy. I had laid down a rule that for so many hours a-day I would follow the advice of a good working parson, who said, "Pull on your mud boots, and tramp about your parish to visit all who want you. This, I think, is by far the best kind of 'Muscular Christianity.'"

This school was to me the most attractive part of my duty. Much of a curate's time can hardly be better spent. The visits you can pay to sick-rooms are limited. You cannot, of course, pray mechanically, or by the hour. Where an effort of the mind and a yearning of the heart must go together, it is a great mistake to suppose that the visits of a clergyman can be as many in a day as those of the lawyer or the doctor, whose visits very often require no effort of mind at all. The houses of the poor are always close, and the chamber of sickness has disagreeables of its own. So, pity the sorrows of a poor curate, who has many a time tried to read without taking breath, from a painful consciousness that he was filling his lungs not with air but malaria.

Two of my friends died of typhus caught in a cottage, and I once experienced so peculiar a sensation in the mouth and throat, that I hastened away to expel suspicious saliva and to take some brandy. I have always believed that the seeds of typhus were all but planted then.

Visits to sick-rooms, therefore, will not fill up the whole day with clergymen generally. My belief is, that our clergy are too refined and too sensitive to do half the work that an inferior order of men could perform in visiting: and this is no slight argument for lay-agency.

I am very far from making excuses for idleness, and am well aware that judges and counsel will breathe the offensive steam of an unwashed crowd twelve hours a-day at assizes. Still I have seen those of a lower order sitting with so little inconvenience, and almost by choice, in the room of a cancerous patient, and ignore all pretence for opening a window, whereas we have been taught

from childhood to pamper our nerves olfactory with lavender, and to deem it vulgar not to shrink aside if anything "unmannerly" pass betwixt the wind and our "nobility." In this respect the devoted members of the City Mission do much which some of the clergy would be physically incapable of performing.

There is also another advantage possessed by men of an inferior order, in visiting. They feel as much excitement (and excitement is extra power) while hammering truisms into three or four washer-women, as a clergyman feels before an educated congregation. This is a decided advantage. A speaker soon wearies where he is not conscious of any sympathy or response. But a plain man, like Isaac Hopkins, would bawl away delighted with the sound of his own voice.

Isaac Hopkins was our bellows-blower at Yatton Church, though all the time a Dissenter at heart. Nothing but the bellows kept Isaac "true to his church." The Badminton menial refused a Whig candidate his vote, because, he said, "I hunt with the Duke." Hopkins held to the Church party because he could say, "I blow for the parson." But the staring fact, that when Isaac slipped off to hear "Methody" on the sly, he heard his mother tongue "with the sense in it," and all seemingly hot from the heart, whereas master's was cold and like "nothing to nobody" from a book—this tried Isaac's orthodoxy very hard, no *ism* being half as repulsive as dull*ism*.

Seeing that the said Hopkins was a compound of about two parts religion to one part conceit, and one part a scholar, I hit upon a plan, which I would strongly recommend for keeping—(if worth keeping)—a would-be Dissenter to the Church. I found Isaac Hopkins a sphere for his enthusiasm, and a platform for his eloquence at the same time.

"Molly Hancock, poor soul!" I said, one day, "cannot prevail upon her bad legs to carry her as far as church. You have a fine loud voice, Hopkins, and Molly is hard of hearing."

This was hint enough for Hopkins. Oh, how often have I envied his leather lungs! Before I was within twenty yards of Molly's house I could hear him, and see a cluster of women without bonnets, and generally Teddy Edwards of the Alms-house, clustering like bees about the door. Now I couldn't do that. I could no more compare with Hopkins in pounding texts into ears hard of hearing, and heads dull of understanding, than in handling a pickaxe.

An army wants pioneers to smooth and clear the way. The Church, also, wants the same thing. We require something like

an Army Works Corps. For where is the economy in educating —and it is impossible to educate in sufficient numbers—men at the cost of 1000*l.* to 2000*l.*, and that, too, in a way to make them almost morbidly sensitive in taste and feeling, and then, as it were, to cut blocks with razors—to blunt the fine edge of their energies on natures too dull to receive any adequate impression?

An English gentleman talks only with his lips. A Frenchman talks all over, in every limb as well as every feature. The Red Indian, haranguing his tribe, raises his hands aloft and rouses the flagging attention by action which attracts the eye, as well as by passion most stirring to the ear. The English vulgar, being only a little less barbarian, require energy only a little less impassioned. And it was by a delivery of this kind, and not by quiet grace and Addisonian strain, that the Rev. Sydney Smith could make Tea-kettle Thomas lean forward upon his elbows, or Jane Cook and Susan feel the better for "their Sunday out."

But my poor old Rector preached to them—actually preached! That was a mistake. I could easily believe them when they said that "they didn't edify." All the servants at the Vicarage were "hired to go to church," so doomed rarely to hear a sermon. I say *hear;* for, the words of the Rector would barely reach the ear. That may be enough for persons of our habits: but, John and Susan want a downright jar upon the tympanum. In this respect Hopkins beat master hollow.

There wasn't a man or woman our side the turnpike-gate but said so. The arrows from the parson's quiver scarcely reached the target, but Hopkins's went plump into the heart of it. Then they all complained that "our parson never uses strong doctrines:" whereas, ruder natures want a very powerful kind of appeal; and Hopkins called heaven and hell by their plainest Bible names.

I once heard Isaac say, on an occasion when the parish was shocked by an awful visitation, "Drunkards, I tell ye, will go to hell. I don't say a man that has a drop too much and is sorry for it, once and again by accident, but I mean a man who can never go straight home with his wages"—sensation among certain women and sheepish look with certain men,—"but must always turn in at the Red Cow"—pointing with his right hand,—"or into the Chequers"—pointing with his left. "There was William Pearce. Where d'ye think he's gone to? He was always drunk. His goods executioned; and his wife and children were a heart-ache to look upon, before ever that day *he died drinking for a wager.* Now, where do you think William is gone to? Tell me that. Why, *ask* the Bible, that's all. There's mercy for them

who cry for mercy in *reasonable* time and *reasonable* manner. God Almighty never gave William time to cry. Time? Yes, he had time. Forty-seven years old he was—that's time! And our parson, let alone you and me, Sally, many 's the day, had warned him, too. I can tell you it went to my heart to hear the service read over such as he. But, when our parson came to that part about 'our hope' 'our brother' was gone to heaven, you all remember how his voice shook, and how he stammered and stopped, and then missed that line, and we were all listening for it. So drunkards, I say, will find their portion in the lake of fire: and therefore, my dear Christian brethren, turn from your drink, and don't draw one another into it. 'Drinking o' healths' you call it, and think it manly and good-fellowship; but the question is, What does Scripture call it?—Why, it's all sin and wickedness."

This was a truthful commentary—by no means the style for Hanover Square, but very stirring where a Hanover Square sermon would have sent all to sleep—on a recent event which had shocked the whole parish. I am not ashamed to admit that it was my "voice" that "shook." I heard afterwards the people were "listening." They did, as I surmised, understand "hope" as belief, and therefore I made the omission to which Isaac referred.

As to the Burial Service, whatever the grammatical sense may be, the impression received by ninety-nine out of a hundred who stand by a grave is this:—that the minister encourages them to think the deceased is saved! Certainly, this is not the meaning these words were intended by their authors to convey: still, since this is the popular acceptation, one of two things is devoutly to be wished,—either that we should have a form which does not even seem to "cry peace where there's no peace,"—or else, that those who are in no sense Christians should not be buried like those who are. I have had the pain of reading the language of Christian hope not only over this evil-liver who died drinking for a wager, but also over a notorious procuress who lived in open defiance of the laws of God and man in another parish. This case, which was as follows, has made an impression which I never can forget:—

"Please sir," said my clerk, "to step into Mrs. Moxon; she's pretty nigh the end of her wicked life at last."

"Well, Hancock, show me the way" (I had only just come to the parish), "and tell me all about her as we go along."

It was an oft-told tale: but, a trade in vice is doubly revolting to my mind when polluting a country village. I have a feeling

that "God made the country, but man made the town." We can, perhaps, imagine a house of harlotry in Belgravia, but not in such rural scenes as Wilkie drew. As I entered a little garden of honeysuckles and carnations, with a blackbird hopping about his white willow cage, while bees were humming, the air was fresh and balmy, and the clear vault of heaven was like one blue arch from hill to hill in that secluded dell—I was shocked as if feeling that God's own temple had been profaned where all creation seemed breathing incense and offering up hymns of praise.

Several of the villagers were standing about the door, and this kind of conversation was going on:—

"It is high time that her sin had found her out," said Anne Tibbs. "Hadn't it been for her, our Polly had never come to trouble."

"No," replied Hannah Jones, "and those two lads at the shop were steady boys before; 'twas she who tempted them to steal money to spend with her in wicked ways."

This, and more deeds of shame, soon filled up the gaps in Hancock's unconnected story, and I began to think how it was possible, by man's wisdom, to bring this degraded woman to a sense of sin. But I might have saved myself the trouble of a thought.

On entering the house I saw a female, of about seventy, moaning in a large arm-chair. Nurse Pipps was in attendance, another woman was acting a neighbourly part, and two more were merely indulging in the excitement of the occasion. The same morbid feeling that crowds the gallows, crowds also the death-beds of the poor.

As I drew near to make a beginning, "A dreadful bad air with her," said Mrs. Pipps; "I never had such a job in nursing, all the years that I have been in Yatton."

The room was indeed most repulsive. However, I commenced with some casual questions, but not one word did she reply.

"Deaf 'tis—stone deaf," said the old nurse, screaming out my words at the pitch of her voice.

I tried again and again, but all in vain, till at last the neighbour, a godly woman, said—words very remarkable in one of her unlettered class,—"Never mind, Master; don't ye trouble. It little matters that she has no ear to hear; it's many a day since she had ever a heart to understand."

Her day of grace seemed past—"dead while she liveth."

About a week after, the people heard the Burial Service read over this (as they believed) unrepenting sinner, "and heard the

parson say he hoped that wicked Mother Moxon was gone to heaven."

To return to Isaac Hopkins and my first trial of lay-agency; —some of my friends will suspect that Isaac was on the highroad to preferment, and will be prepared to hear of some Bethesda meeting-house, with Isaac as the Methody.

Nothing of the kind resulted in the case in question, neither would it have been any fault of mine if it had. No fear of possible results should ever prevent a clergyman from encouraging one Christian neighbour to read to another. Still, such fears have caused many a poor bed-ridden soul to be limited to a fractional and an utterly inappreciable portion of the feeble services of one tired curate.

Many persons are far more afraid of some false doctrines being taught, than of no truth at all. They have a horror of heresy and schism, while patiently resigned to heathenism. They argue that lay-teachers are not to be trusted, forgetting that a certain bishop said, "Education of some kind is always going on, and if we don't teach people the devil will."

This reminds me of certain charity economics which prevailed a few years ago. The good old ways of carrying a cut from your own loaf or your own leg of mutton when coming towards the bone to some poor family, and returning warm with their blessing—one way of laying your treasure up in heaven and actually feeling an earnest of it while yet on earth—this was declared all a mistake. It was gravely enunciated that we ought to be charitable on some grand scheme and all-embracing principle. Of course, the result of all this philosophy was, that many persons waiting for that world-wide opportunity never gave at all.

The same absurdity now cramps our faith which then chilled our charity. A poor soul who has learnt every other piece of good news naturally runs off to tell it; but the glad tidings of the Gospel, forsooth, he is not to be encouraged to tell, for fear he should tell it badly! And more than this, though the same glad tidings are written in a book, he is not to help to read that book, because, while reading the word, he may venture on the sense, and his version may not always be the right one!

This strange reasoning entirely ignores the fact that doctrine, like other things in this mortal world, is more or less sound by comparison. There are very few clergymen who would not plead guilty of having taught false doctrine on some point, in the days of their inexperience. Nay, one half the Church is always accusing, and being accused by the other half, of the self-same

thing. Very little bread is quite pure, and a large part of our eatables and drinkables is by no means as good for us as they might be, but that is no reason we should starve; so we put up with the best we can get, very thankful to those good people who devote their lives to ensure purity of food and health of body.

This is precisely the office the Clergy of the Established Church discharge, to ensure the purity of our spiritual food and the health of the soul. Neither can the Clergy be too jealous of the purity of the word. They should not derogate from the true standard in the balance of a hair. But this is no reason for checking or discouraging the distribution. At the miracle of the loaves, our Saviour gave to his disciples, and they to the multitude, who probably handed on to each other; and yet, with the bread of life, it is pretended that we should rather see the multitude starve than employ persons who can distribute to those whom the Clergy of the Church of England cannot hope to reach.

Consider the case of learning and school education. How small a part is done by the responsible master? how large a part is done, and much worse done, by inferior assistants? How many blunders and bad habits do these half-educated assistants entail throughout life? Still it is the best education the cause admits of, and better far than none.

Plain as this is—too plain to argue—yet have I seen, all my life, men indifferent to ignorance in their zeal for orthodoxy; men who prefer utter darkness to a degree of light by which thousands have walked in perfect safety. Who could credit such utter fatuity? Yet, it is by no means uncommon to see Ministers of the Gospel (so professing), in their horror of lay-agency as "Low Church," tolerate a state of heathenism like "no-Church-at-all."

But as to the chance of Isaac's Home Mission turning to Dissent, I would impress on my readers that I warned him seriously to limit his exhortations—for, of course, no man hearty in the cause will be satisfied with reading alone—to matters recently learnt from me. If I preached in the church, and he repeated all he could remember—and it is an invaluable rule in sermon-writing to write clearly and strikingly, as for some Isaac Hopkins to repeat—then he would be such an ally to the Church as would amount to a wide publication of the Gospel message. Isaac was delighted with this arrangement. The idea that the Minister gave to the Disciple, and he to the multitude, seemed to Isaac the perfection of discipline and good sense.

As to Dissent, Henry, bishop of Exeter, once remarked,

"You must not talk to me about people being Dissenters where they have had no Church to dissent from."—This his Lordship said of a place where there was a Church and a Minister, but only the chance of a dark corner of the church on Sundays, and a very small portion—just about one sixth-thousandth part—of the minister's energies on week-days, available for any one of the poor.

There is a rule of law, *De non apparentibus et de non existentibus eadem est ratio;* which I take to mean that, whether there is positively no Church at all, or "none to signify," the path of duty is the same. Who, then, can deny the position of our High-Church Prelate,—that for poor souls to provide teachers for themselves where the Church has provided none for them, is neither Schism nor Dissent? As to there being no Church for the poor, supposing a "Times Commissioner" were sent to inquire into the spiritual destitution of the poor, I do believe that the report would be one of the most astounding ever set forth, even from "our own reporter's" pen. A new word would then be introduced into the language. All persons not of the Church are called "Dissenters." But Dissenters become such as frequently from necessity as from choice.

It is true that some of the more violent Dissenters are of a class who could find instruction in the Church if they pleased,—not a few are persons whose Dissent is a matter of temper and self-importance—persons who care as little about doctrines as many Radicals care, or even know, about the Constitution. Many persons in religion, as in daily life, look at everything to criticise. Instead of saying, What is it, "that I may believe?" their first feeling is, What is it, "that I may differ from it?" This kind of temper results in Dissent as to religion, and in Radicalism as to politics; both forms being often found in the same character.

I do not say that there is no such thing as a conscientious Dissenter, that is, a man who, understanding the Church doctrines, can say, "While I admit nineteen parts out of twenty, my conscience is so sensitive that I cannot touch or handle anything with even one-twentieth of alloy." But I do say, that I never did meet with such delicacy of conscience in the common intercourse of life. With so scrupulous a conscience, a Dissenter's word ought to be more trustworthy than another man's bond. The wonder is that Dissenters have never been preferred for their great conscientiousness, whether as friends, debtors, or traders. The peaceable principles of Quakers make their life insurable at a reduced premium. How is it that the conscience of Dissenters

has not long since driven Churchmen altogether out of the market?

But are the Dissenters as a body *reputed* conscientious? I say nothing about what they *are*. I say, have they impressed society with the conviction? Churchmen by thousands never read the Articles or bring the Liturgy to the test of Scripture; and, if they did, they would feel no more bound to leave their Church for three or four errors in the Prayer-book, than to leave their country for as many errors in its laws. So, genuine Dissenters must, in comparison, be conscientious indeed. But, have they the credit of it? I say it not unkindly or satirically, but as a fact, that such phrases as "Mind how you deal with him, he's a Dissenter"—"he will palaver you and over-reach you at the same time"—that this I have heard all my life. Nay, more, the poet Burns, in a letter dated 1795, observed the same thing, and asked why the Dissenters were such a false set? Sir W. Scott, about 1820, discussed the same point as an acknowledged fact. So Dissenters clearly have not more conscience than other men, or they would not be even reputed to have less. Indeed, we may truly say, that, in spite of the tempting facilities of Absolution, Roman Catholics command quite as much confidence as Dissenters. All, therefore, I can understand by a conscientious Dissenter is, a man who has been born a Dissenter, and who, therefore, feels the same allegiance to his party that a Churchman feels.

Neither can I help remarking how superficial—how much in the lips and how little in the life—is the religion of Dissent. A Dissenter's religion generally has added as much of the Christian character as consists in a quiet and decent exterior. Dissenters rarely swear or use bad language, or are guilty of the more shocking and grosser forms of sin. So much to their praise. My disappointment is—seeing that thousands of persons for years to come must be either Dissenters or Heathens—to find that the leaven which leaveneth the *whole* lump—the distinctive charity and consistency of the Christian—is so rarely to be found beyond the pale of the Church.

The tree of Dissent, judged by its fruits, is bad. This is a fact very painful to observe. And it behoves the earnest and devoted leaders of the Dissenting communities to look to the root of the evil and apply a remedy.

Let it be granted, therefore, that some who are called Dissenters are positively malcontents—persons guilty of "schism," "divisions," "heresies," and all from a "carnal" or "self-pleasing" temper. But, what are we to say of the thousands and

the tens of thousands who have been actuated by no such feelings—who have been square-pewed, pulpit-Englished, and cold-shouldered out of the Church?—yes, "cold-shouldered" is by no means too strong a term, especially after the honourable testimony of the Rev. J. C. Ryle about the Special Services. "The thing," he says, "was done"—throwing open the pews and inviting the working classes to come without distinction—"and the fact was seen, that when you go out of your routine path to meet the working classes, they will come and meet you."

It actually appears, then, that to throw open the pews and to invite the poor, *without distinction*, is admitted to have been something new—quite an experiment, and an original idea. And this *distinction* aforesaid being all on the side of the upper classes, there grew up a kind of preaching to suit the upper classes too.

Take the case of Mary Snooks.

Mrs. Mary Snooks, of the chandler's shop, used to water the treacle, damp the tobacco, touch the scale-beam with her little finger, and cut off the house-flannel the wrong side her thumb: and I fancy I can see Mrs. Snooks at church, partly hidden by a pillar in *chiaro 'scuro*, catching half sentences of a sermon as little suited to her rough nature as a dish of flummery to a hungry navvy. I have examined a great many such persons as Mary Snooks, and I give the following as the report of some "Times' Commissioner:"—

Mr. Frost is a schoolmaster. Took generally twelve pupils to the church of B——. The church was very large, and the minister's voice was rather weak. He could follow the prayers because he knew them; but he never heard the sermon for seven years.

Edward Astlet is a National Schoolmaster. His boys were very restless in church, for none of them could hear. He was forced to use the cane more than if they could hear. One hour's schooling before church made them more restless still. He wished me not to tell the minister they couldn't hear, for fear he should think it was the fault of his voice.

Mary Stone kept a chandler's shop. Was good friends with the pew-opener; so "once had a stool reg'lar," near the door. Was now a Primitive Christian. Could hear and understand in chapel—little of either in church. Felt welcome in chapel, but felt an unpleasant sensation of being "one too many" in church.

James Kite thought a man could go to heaven with one doctrine as well as another—that the worst of us knew quite

good enough if we would only do it. His opinion of Church was, that every man ought to have a place to rest his back and room to stretch his legs.

George Mason was no bigot about doctrines. Didn't care whether it was in a church or in a chapel, so that he could sit comfortable, and hear and understand. Thought church sermons might be good for scholars and gentlefolks. Used once to attend a village church—there felt as if he had a right to be, as in chapel—kept to his church till "he was frozen out like."

David Lane wasn't particular about doctrines, so that he could hear and edify, and have a proper place and feel somebody. He said there were more of his sort at chapel, not scholars, and preached to like plain people.

This examination I could continue through a volume. The rarest answer of all is, "We disagree with such Church doctrine." No, some Dissenters were born in Dissent, and hearing every one (to justify his schism) abuse the Church, they learnt at last conscientiously to abjure it; but the larger part would say, "I didn't leave the Church, the Church left me;" and he says "I was driven out by the sexton from want of room:" another says, "I was repelled by the preaching too fine for such as me; and nearly all might truly say, "When once I had joined a chapel, certain feelings and privileges, social and secular, formed so large an ingredient in my 'mixed motives,' that by no possible reform could the Church ever get me back again."

There is also another cause of Dissent. In proportion as men and women have strong religious instincts, they want communion. This communion implies sympathy; and, sympathy may be warmed into life where calico fraternises with calico, and corduroy with fustian, and where the minister has only to touch one chord to vibrate throughout all: but, it is very different where rich silks and fine barège fill nine pews out of ten. Remember, what moves tears at Sadler's Wells is sheer bombast at St. James's Theatre. That which, by a "touch of nature," makes all feel akin, is too rare to expect.

Our theatres very aptly illustrate another point: our larger theatres being found too large for acting, are generally reserved for music. People did not like dumb show, or straining their ears to catch distant sounds, so they stayed away; and, large theatres have given place to others of a reasonable size, where the voice will not only reach the ear, but pierce the heart. But, large churches are deserted by the poor, and yet no man suggests the same cause or the same remedy. Many persons will remark, "If we can hear,

the poor can." But this is altogether a mistake: for, our ears are practised: and the subject and language are so familiar, that if we hear three-fourths of a sentence, we can guess the rest: whereas the poor man, if he loses part of the sentence, loses the sense of the whole.

"The lamented Rev. Frederic Robertson, late of Brighton," said a friend, "no one ever could admire more than I did, so long as I sat near enough to catch not only his words, but his intonations; but when I removed to the end of the church I missed the earnestness of his look and the fervour of his heart. He was then quite a different preacher. Sympathy failed, and the effect was comparatively spoilt."

As regards public worship, there has been too little consideration of the habits of the poor. Educated persons are familiar with the subject, and come less to be taught than to be admonished. St. James's or St. Pancras will serve for them, and one voice for two thousand people; and they cannot be too thankful for the privilege. As to that selfish spirit which leaves one church for another from mere preference for a preacher, or as having "a right to consult their own improvement,"—this, with the educated, is a gross violation of all duty, decency, and common sense."

But the size of the church and powers of the preacher may justly be considered by the poor man. For, nearly all he can learn of the tidings of salvation is from the preacher. Therefore, whether it be the poor man's ear or the instrument that is out of tune, still, "if the trumpet give an uncertain sound," the sooner we investigate the cause and apply the remedy, the sooner will the Church act in conformity with its high calling.

But to return to my friend Isaac, and his pound-text energies. I am not going to pay myself, or my Clerical Brethren generally, so bad a compliment as to imply that, with the same freedom from all the ties of taste and etiquette, I could not also cause a fluttering and a tumult under the smockfrocks or cotton handkerchiefs of Giles Digweed the gardener, or Betty Warsop the monthly nurse, of Yatton parish.

I need not describe our blacksmith's shop. Few villages are without one, and nearly all smithies look the same. The smith is one of the earliest mechanics mentioned in history. Remember how the victorious Philistines dreaded the aid the smiths could lend to the Israelites when they were smarting under their defeat.

William Simpson, our Vulcan, was something of a scholar, and a politician too: indeed, Simpson was a man of varied talent. I have known him act Shoemaker by nailing boots. I have known

him act Dentist in the absence of the Union doctor. I have known the same William Simpson act the Lawyer, too—it was to draw up a last will and testament for Tom Davy, the huntsman, who had stored up ever so many capfulls of half-crowns at the savings' bank.

Never did I realise the wisdom of our testamentary laws to save a scramble and to end a strife before William Simpson was thought of, and that will was made. For poor Tom was three days dying: and, besides this, Tom was given over five days more: and, three days' work did his niece Emma, on his wife's side, and his own nephew, Harry, actually lose in watching for the first pounce on the clock, crockery, dresser, and other goods and chattels of the dying uncle. But all such uncivilised notions were frowned away when Simpson laid down the law to them. The parish clerk usually officiates for lack or dread of lawyers, just as the monthly nurse sometimes supplants the doctor.

William Simpson's shed, as a cover to keep off the rain, and with fire to defy the cold, was no bad place for a little talk on parish matters: and, for a really fresh and original piece of conversation, commend me to the wayside wisdom of an intelligent mechanic.—One day, a fatal accident had occurred, a tipsy waggoner having fallen under his wheel, and I had naturally to try my powers, after the manner of Hopkins, to produce a suitable impression upon the awe-stricken rustics who were gathered round.

On these occasions, when nature speaks within us, words from the heart go to the heart, and every clergyman who deserves the name he bears can hold all eyes fixed intently on him. Standing by William Simpson's forge, I have literally seen the red iron grow cold, so spell-bound and riveted has William been, with his hobnailed friends, by every word I have uttered. And yet this same Simpson, when he had his face washed, and Sunday coat on, with red waistcoat and glass buttons, would look up at my pulpit very respectfully perhaps, but not at all as if I were saying anything that very nearly concerned him.

"How is it, sir," he once asked, "that I can listen to you so much better when you are standing against our anvil than up there in that pulpit?"

"Because, William," I replied, "here we talk face to face, and because it is talking—because I am in the mood to talk, and you are equally in the mood to hear—two conditions which are essential to all natural and useful talking. Another reason is, because all I have to do is to interest you and those like you, whereas in the pulpit I must consider the squire, the doctor, some

ladies, and small gentry, all at the same time. For instance, suppose you were to go into our school and mix the good scholars with the bad, how would the teacher get on then?"

"Well, sir," said Simpson, "I begin to understand: for by the time the sermon comes I am not 'in a mood' to hear any more; and you seem tired like, and not in a mood to talk. The Methody ought to beat you with these odds certainly, for he has short prayers to begin with, and then he is fresh, and we are fresh —all fresh and alive together, and ——"

"Stop, Simpson. One point more; if I put you on the top of yonder wall, one hundred and fifty feet off, could you speak easily and naturally then?"

"I see, sir; not talking then, but hallooing—mouthing of some sort—yes, preaching—something not natural. Well, to be sure, this seems reasonable enough, but then the Dissenter ——"

"Yes, the Dissenter's preaching seems an exception—but how big is this Dissenter's chapel?"

"True, his chapel is small. I see now he can more easily and naturally talk to us."

"And, one question more: What kind of congregation has this Methodist? Why, all of one class, where he is really effective."

But I have more to say on this point another time.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CURATE IN HIS LONELY LODGINGS—FORCED TO MARRY IN SELF-DEFENCE.

ALL this time my reader, having walked round my parish, will, especially if a lady, be curious to have a peep at my lodgings. No man depends more on a home than a clergyman. Much of his work must be in-door work. He can rarely visit the sick till he has allowed time for some small cottage duties; and his visits would be equally ill-timed at a late hour. The dinner-time also makes a pause. So, for many hours out of the twenty-four, if a clergyman has no home society and comforts, few persons will miss them more.

I lodged at Weston the farmer's. He was an easy and silent man; not so his wife, who was a scraggy, cantankerous woman. I named her "the bones of contention." The farm-house was in a beautiful valley, about half a mile from the church. Yet, many a fine morning, whilst all nature smiled without doors, there were angry frowns within. My heart used to ache for Polly "Gutter;" so named at the workhouse, because found in one—the poor parish-'prentice, born to a rich estate in cuffs and hard words. Sterne says, though many have thought it was from Scripture, "God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb." The Almighty also mercifully deadens the senses to the sorrow; so, Polly had no nervous system: and, Polly could bear scoldings as the blacks bear heat: because, born in a clime where nothing else prevails. She had been pounded and moulded to the old workhouse temperature.

Aristotle says shrewdly, that one way to make a man angry is to be most indifferent when he is most in a hurry. Polly had found out that without the help of Aristotle, and said, "Ven missus wants I to go quicker than I can, I puts on a tidy bit slower than I was afore."—Then "missus" would be boisterous, indeed. Yes, it was a charming spot was Weston's farm; but,

"All, save the nature of man, was divine."

So my abode might well have seemed to be an Arcadian retreat, all peace and honeysuckles; whereas I was a martyr to harsh sounds from the mistress's pipes, and bad pigtail from the master's. Polly was my Hebe. Polly "laid my things and did out my room." I had a sitting-room and bed-room up one pair of stairs. An angular cupboard in the corner held all my little creature comforts, —tea, sugar, coffee, and a bottle of spirits; wine was in reserve for my occasional visitors. I kept on good terms with Mrs. Weston. The truth is, I was afraid of her: because, unlike Polly, I had a nervous system: and, to have my pulse irritated up to a hundred beats a minute, whether by woman's tongue or by any other means, is too much wear and tear for my constitution.

Here, then, in this farm-lodging, I was at times almost as dull and solitary as Robinson Crusoe himself. I became fond of Polly as my Mrs. Friday. I always left some tea in my cup, and rarely quite finished my punch, that Polly might drain the glass. Polly tried, though in parish-'prentice style, to return the compliment, and did everything she could think of to show attention: but, what with arranging my books upside down, and making a medley of my papers, these attentions were rather troublesome.

I had very little variety, and scarcely any visiting. I dined at the Rectory every Sunday, but rarely on other days. Jerry Edwards the steward, and Michael Willis the land-agent, and some of the principal farmers, used to invite me to dine, but I contrived to compound, by taking an early luncheon with them, so that I should not seem to despise their hospitalities. I did not spend an evening out once in six weeks. In the winter months, as I had no horse, the distances and bad lanes rendered the houses of the few country families inaccessible. Therefore, being generally at home, the dead silence of my farm-lodging was for hours unbroken, save by the falling embers and the ticking of the clock; for, the master was asleep by eight o'clock; and mistress, who began her scoldings and driving about before daybreak, was tired out.

All this was favourable to study, but not for sermons. The partitions were too thin for reading aloud; and this is no slight privation: for, I could not practise delivery or extempore language. The sight of Polly Gutter even was a relief; and I am sure I rang for things I was only half inclined to have, just to hear the sound of my own voice in ordering them. Polly's life had been so peculiar that her ideas and feelings were quite a curious study to me. Polly liked to give her notions an airing, too; and as even dogs know their friends, she had generally some piece of talk, domestic or parochial, bursting under high pressure, till she could

stump up to me. Stumping indeed it was, not walking. Fancy a tall, bony girl of eighteen, with hobnailed shoes, a brown stuff dress, made not much fuller than a sack, and with bare arms and red neck, half covered with a yellow handkerchief.

Once she said—I give but imperfectly Polly's dialect—"You heard the noise below-stairs with master a-blowing up missus, didn't you, sir? Well, sir, this was all about the Methody: and why should Methodies always come at dinner-times, just in time for cabbage and bacon extra in the pot? 'A convarting of ye, you calls it!' says master; 'he pretty nearly lives on us! He've a ate up one half the pig, and he'll soon eat up t'other half! I shan't have no more of it!' says master. Ah, and he's in the right! Methodies wouldn't never make a pious job of missus. Not forty wouldn't!"

A few minutes of this kind of gossip formed my only society and conversation, between four o'clock and eleven sometimes, on lonely winter evenings. The result was that I began to feel it was not good for man to be alone, and I was not disposed to be half as particular in my choice as if I had lived in a civilised land. Mrs. Weston made all ladies seem amiable; Polly Gutter made all ladies seem elegant. What my lot wanted in fact was made up by fancy. Dreamland is the merciful inheritance of men of no estate; and a castle in the air produces as pleasurable sensations as a real castle sometimes, and without any of its pains and penalties. No man wants a wife as badly as a parson. The celibacy of the clergy is an absurdity, indeed. It is in vain to keep ladies out of a man's house unless you also keep them out of his head. For, all from want of one actual spouse, my mind was a complete thoroughfare for charming creatures of all forms and figures whom a yearning imagination bodied forth.

St. Paul, our great example, had no wife, it is true. But I was not a St. Paul. Missionaries have been placed amidst scenes so stirring, that all the yearnings of the natural man find vent in a single channel; but this was not my case. Certainly, it is a great fault to depreciate examples of piety, and no less baneful is it to plead for cold indifference; still, we may fairly assert that man's noblest energies and spirit of self-sacrifice require a very tempest of excitement to stir them up. Witness how not a few of the ne'er-do-wells of our country villages, caught half tipsy by a shilling and a ribbon, turned heroes at Sebastopol! Every age has its trials. The said heroes could withstand bullets, but not beer; Mars, but not Bacchus. So, the faith which faces fire and sword, labours, dangers, and suffering, might be damped and de-

moralised by an easy and solitary life—just as a city, impregnable from without, falls a prey to treason and tumultuous spirits from within.

After a time I began to feel moped and dreary.

I now wrote letters to my sisters very frequently, and had as many replies, with all the fid-fad of the home circle; and all these letters contained frequent mention of Miss Ellen Horley. Ellen was a good girl I knew—just such a one as a man's sisters think he ought to marry. But what man can endure the idea of Cupid in leading-strings? "Ellen was not bad-looking; she was amiable, she was managing, she was good-principled, she would make the best of parsons' wives." All this I had heard till I was tired of it. I had also a hint that Ellen was not happy at home, and that I was not likely to be refused. Worse and worse! the path of true love made smooth, indeed! Who wants to hunt a lame hare? If a Miss Hannah More had a lady from the cradle, and a Mrs. Trimmer did the finishing, there is not one man in twenty who would be attracted by that. Attracted! certainly not. "I married your dear mother," said my father, "not for her virtues, but for herself. Indeed, I never thought about her virtues till that crabbed captain's wife came to stay with us and gave me an insight into their cat-and-dog life at the Priory."

This is the way of the world. There is a *je ne sais quoi* that attracts, while all that ensures wedded happiness is a mere make-weight in the balance, "an accessory after the fact." That "something" seemed wanting in Ellen Horley. The fact was, I had seen too much of her. No one is a hero to his *valet de chambre:* no lady is an angel to an every-day acquaintance. I had seen Ellen looking her best and looking her worst; fair and freckled, pale as well as rosy, with colds and coughs, in high spirits and in low spirits; nipped with cold at Christmas, and melting with heat in the dog-days. I had seen Ellen by the side of that beautiful and captivating flirt—yes, a proper flirt, Emma Crofton. Ellen was only mortal; but love pictures the ideal.

There is something very unsatisfactory in plain matter of fact. Hope does far more for our happiness than possession. If man knew the length and breadth of every morsel of happiness he would taste in this world, he would indeed say, "All is vanity." At that time of life I was particularly imaginative, and had my full share of romance and sentiment: so, of course, I was imagining hearts united, sighs responsive, and the female habits of five-and-twenty suddenly melted down and recast to blend, without jar or friction, with my own. I forgot that all this might involve love up one

pair of stairs, a Polly Gutter for a lady's maid, no society within miles, washerwomen and weeding-women only to speak to, muddy lanes to walk in; and, in short, the forcible dislocation of every joint in the poor lady's social and moral nature.

All this time I was in love, and I was only looking for some one to be in love with. Well, why not? Don Quixote conceived chivalrous feelings first, and started in quest of imprisoned maidens afterwards. I had yearnings, and no one to caress; I had sympathies, and no one to respond. I felt at times, or thought I did, one breathing compound of charities, benevolence, amenities, all wasting "their sweetness on the desert air," with visions of fair spirits enough to people Fairyland, and enough soft sighs to turn a windmill.

"Why did Mr. Strange or Mrs. Queer marry such an oddity as they are severally linked to?"

"Because they were in a mood to invest that oddity with a ready-made suit of charms, and only found it was a bad fit afterwards."

However, the question did occur, What were we to marry on? I had expectations, and so had Ellen. Something might drop in on either side; but, however much we are impressed with the uncertainty of life, the moment we depend on an old uncle's *post obit* it seems almost positive that he will live for ever. Still, I felt I must do something to better my condition; because I thought it not like a clergyman to form a habit of spending my evenings out, even if nearer a town. One day, while I was in this state of mind, Dawson, the curate of a neighbouring parish, came in, and we talked the matter over.

"You want a horse," said he. "Having a horse, I find society of some kind, though only to ride into Hamley to have my hair cut, to talk to the bookseller, find a book to read, and back again. Though, really, sometimes I am sadly moped too. Why, last week I was up-stairs in the parlour with my cigar, and Tom was below-stairs in the kitchen with his pipe; and I really had the hardest matter in the world to resist inviting Tom—that's my groom—to bring his pipe up to me; and as it was, I found some pretence for going down to Tom to talk of the horse, or to give some direction, amounting to nothing. But this is not nearly as bad for you, for you are studious. Think of poor fellows like me, who rarely read but as a matter of duty."

"Yes," said Wingfield, another curate, "that's why I am so much afraid of a country curacy. In a town, the clergy keep each other company; an hour or so once a-week breaks the deadening

spell. But a whole winter of long evenings, in a lone farm-house, is enough to turn my brain. We feel not only lonely, but pitifully lonely. Why, Mother Fletcher, at Oak's Farm, would say to me, 'Bless us sir, we feels for you! An't you mazed, or daft, or summut?' If I heard voices, I fancied they were talking of me. Once, when I upset a table, all the family came rushing up-stairs, thinking I was in a fit, and one said, 'No one could wonder, sir, if you was to be.' Actually, little Fanny Fletcher—I used to give her playthings, and amused myself with the child—asked if I was put up there in disgrace! Now, all this is wretched, and makes one sympathise with old Joe Tucker, who said, when I praised the comforts of the Union: 'If you was here you'd find, sir, there are lots of room for a poor mortal to be a-ready to hang his self, all the same he be sure of three meals a-day.'"

"And I have no doubt," rejoined Dawson, "this is where those religious crotchets come from. They result from all this solitary confinement, and I shall call them 'farm-house phantoms.' Really, this may very naturally be deemed one cause of those follies; for, just as if you stare hard at an object till your eyes ache, you will see it out of all proportion; so, if you dwell moodily on one idea, you won't know dreaming from thinking, till at last you make a haunted chamber of your mind."

"Exactly so," said Wingfield; "or, to speak less philosophically, you may brood and cackle over one egg till it's addled."

But all this time I can fancy some censorious advocate of human perfectibility will say, "Then you admit that the clergy are not superior to these mortal follies?"

I reply, that some of the clergy, perhaps, are born monks—all head and no heart, and some are too good and wise. Some men have commanding talents, and are engrossed wholly by one great and noble purpose. I cannot conceive a Sir Isaac Newton with a wife; a Wesley or a Whitefield we should also expect to find "without encumbrances." Yet the Apostle St. Paul took a more practical view, and chose to regard men as men are and ever will be. He said, "I would that all men were as I am," but he knew that "all men cannot receive it."

I am not excusing but describing, and describing one of many, very many, of the ministers of the present day.

It is a great error to quote one name in a century and say, "This romance or folly was unknown to the truly great." One advantage of the truly great in this world is, that our eyes are diverted from their littleness. For the noblest compound of flesh

and blood would shrink into very common-place mortality if seen in all their motives and their weakness precisely as they really were.

Be that as it may, I never pretended to be great. At times I had formed great schemes of usefulness. I had fancied myself sometimes in a foreign land, with hundreds of converted heathens flocking round my banana-tree. But as to mere Englishmen and Englishwomen, this mild and easy sphere of duty has even seemed too easy for my energies. Difficulties so trivial seemed swept away before the torrent of my thoughts, and hundreds of such hearers seemed to be moulded in a month, according to my will. So, all my ideas of a minister were of attack, of progress, of an unflinching onslaught on some powers without—self was to be nothing—the good cause everything.

I confess, then, I felt humiliated when now, for the first time, I was made to feel there were certain unruly powers in my own breast, and a prior conquest to be made within, and that I was precisely the same man after ordination as before. My duties were new, my resolution was new, my motive was new and powerful also, but poor human nature remained in me as fallible as before. I always had delighted in the society of ladies, and I always had indulged in sentimental feelings, and now my mind was like the camp in India,—"in spite of the strictest orders from head-quarters that no ladies should follow, you couldn't enter a bungalow but there they were."

I am now describing my feelings after the first year. The novelty of my position, and the excitement of duty, with long summer evenings and the variety so afforded, did pretty well at first; but then solitude began to tell upon my spirits, and matrimony, as the natural cure for solitude, gradually stole upon my mind.

When once the idea seized me, it grew more vivid and absorbing. Soon my single state was made the cause of every ill that flesh is heir to. It is the same with any prevalent epidemic of the mind, as Thucydides says it was of the plague of Athens,—"All other maladies solve into this." Ellen Horley's mild and placid figure rose day by day more frequently before me. In imagination she made my tea; she stitched my sermon paper; she sat silent and motionless when I was writing; she put down her crochet (I never thought of baby-linen) when I left off, and seemed born to cool my throbbing brain and ease life's burthens when heavy at the heart. The only thing was, Ellen Horley seemed too easy a conquest. Though fond of trout, I like catching

them. Our desires in this world are like the boys' kites: loosen their string, and down they come.

While in this state of mind, I had *such* a letter from my sister Fanny! She could tell me that "others could admire if I could not." There had been a yeomanry ball. One officer had danced twice with Ellen, and called next day and spoke of her to my sisters: and "there was no denying that he did look so well in his uniform" (a pigeon-chested fellow — the tailor had stuffed his breast like a turkey; I was sure of that). "All the ladies had caught the *scarlet* fever. If I had really any idea of Ellen Horley, I had better not delay, or the prize would no doubt be gone."

This letter put me in a fever. I felt a deeply-injured individual. For an utter stranger to step between me and my Ellen — yes, my Ellen, I thought — in this manner, that was provoking, indeed! And Ellen, too! What could she mean? Hadn't she — didn't she ——? No, I couldn't say that; she had not promised me the refusal. No, no; I couldn't say that of her. But — but — but, at least, I had taken it for granted that I could marry her, if I liked; and now I was grievously disappointed.

Ellen's image was now ten times more vivid — ten times more frequently before me. I had been unsettled before: so unsettled, indeed, that I thought I must marry out of principle. Yes, out of principle! At all events, it was quite as much out of principle as many other things that claim to be so done. I allude to that economical morality which hits pleasure and duty with the same stone.

But if before I was unsettled, now I was positively wild — altogether out of tune and unstrung. For three days, I am ashamed to confess how disturbed was my mind, how far from the unruffled temper of a true Minister of the Gospel! I read first one book and then another. First I started out with some object, then I turned round and came back, and, perhaps, wrote half a letter and tore it up again. My fever was at its highest at the time the post was expected. Oh! how hastily did I sally forth to meet old Bony, with his pony and bag and yard of tin, descried upon the Common! At other times I paced up and down my little room, till Polly Gutter asked if I "had not a ramping toothache? Missus said I should wear the floor through; and she couldn't a-bear it."

"And did you not call yourself religiously to account? Did you yield to all this folly without a thought?"

No; it cost me many and many a struggle. Duty, reason, the

pastoral character, resignation—all were present to my mind. I read one morning in St. Paul's Epistle, "No man entangleth himself," but I was entangled. I was in a maze. There was a violent tumult within me; the question was to disentangle, to calm, to assuage—in short, to hasten home and put an end to my distracted state.

While arranging with my Rector, another letter from my sister told me that Ellen had heard a very bad account of this "captain bold," as a *roué* and a gambler: and that though Mrs. Fixham had gone to the expense of a tea-and-negus party on purpose to let him (her nephew) see more of Ellen, the dear girl declined—indeed, she had shown great character in the matter—doubly honourable to her virtues, because her stepmother, Mrs. Horley, did nothing but talk at her and snub her all the day long.

And shouldn't I rescue imprisoned maiden from these cruel bonds? Shouldn't I set her free? Every good, every manly feeling, seemed to urge me on. It did seem so flattering to me that she would not marry every one; and so charming to dote on the happiness I could bestow.

Who hasn't had love-dreams of some seamstress lady bid to stitch no more—some orphan governess restored to all the elegancies a spendthrift father had lost, and owning a benefactor in her spouse?—So changed was the spirit of my dream, I began to think I was going to do some most disinterested act! I could have pictured the cruel stepmother as a coiled-up hydra, Ellen in the centre shrinking for her forked tongue, and myself as the champion to snatch the frightened dove away!

Now shift the scene, push on the clock of time, and fancy me at home—and a consultation with my sisters on ways and means. But would she accept me? "Why, Ellen was a peculiar girl"—my sister "rather thought she admired a different kind of man. Ellen's conversation always made her think so."

Exactly so. This is the way with ladies; in speaking of the tender passion they always try to blind each other. Still, my heart beat nervously again. I didn't then suspect that artifice. I thought such bosom-friends must know.

However, we talked, and talked away, till at last it was quite late. All the house was gone to bed. Our candles were burning to the sockets, and the fire had gone out, and my sister Emily—she had not a spark of sentiment in her whole composition, but was born for an old maid, and never had a beau in her life—Emily, I say, was quite impatient; but Fanny, who had a little affair that really "came to something"—she is a widow with

three children now, and conjugal felicity has worn her to the bone—Fanny could never talk enough.

"You speak of '*must* marry.' 'A clergyman never settled.' Well, with Ellen that will do; she is domesticated, she is. Ellen has been long used to self-denial and to home life. But I know you would rather have Emma Crofton—much you know about it, for Emma would 'settle' you with a vengeance! She is a proper 'settler' for any man. No parsonage would hold her. Anna Singleton is just as bad: another 'settler.' No Polly Gutter must come near Miss Anna. You couldn't thwart her, or you would have her nervous and hysterics (that's French for blubbering) all day."

"But, at all events, Mary Downs is another 'settler,' worse than any. Mary Downs would positively ruin you. She takes care of nothing, locks up nothing, mends nothing. I wouldn't do her darning for a trifle. Country balls are necessaries of life for all these girls. They will flirt with anybody.—Then, Kate Anson is another 'settler.' Kate would turn a man's house out of window if he dared oppose her. He must also provide her with admirers. I never saw such vanity in any girl as in Kate. I know you would say she is accomplished. This I admit. Kate could play by the hour, but there is no pleasure in that when your wife is all the while in 'a fit of the pouts.'"

"Yes but, Fanny, when once a girl is married ——"

"That is a mistake, Harry. Girls, when married, do not change their nature. Good tempers, perhaps, become bad and soured by more trouble than they can bear, but no bad nature becomes much better. Girls who are selfish while single are selfish when married. No, no. How seriously you talk, Harry, of marrying, and of having some one to comfort and assist you in the secluded duties of a clergyman's life! You say you feel 'unsettled and good for nothing.' How should you like to be more unsettled and good for less?"

"But," I said, "do you think any wife would not be a great assistance, and ——"

"Assistance! Why, some wives want—yes, and have, more time and attention than all the parish put together. There's the Rector of Splashy appointed to the cure of his fat wife; the Archdeacon of Windward's shovel-hat and all cannot keep Mrs. W. in awe—always tacked on to him, and devising dinner-parties to show off her High-Church dignity and her highly-polished plate. Now you, Harry, are nervous, excitable, feeling, and sympathetic: drops of comfort would be the making of you,

but there are such things as 'acidulated drops.' Trickling water wears stone, but dropping vinegar would reduce your whole nature to a state of decomposition. And, just consider: how would you write sermons, all loving-kindness and charity, yourself made as sour and peevish as ——?"

Here Fanny was running on with all that fertility of illustration so plentiful with ladies when the talk is of matrimony. But the unsentimental Emily would wait no longer, but drew her sister Fanny off to bed, and sent me to my room, a more excited but a wiser man. Once more I thought, prudent or not prudent, "out of principle" I must try to secure such a treasure as Ellen. Yes, once more "out of principle." So, men decide from impulse first, and feel much flattered in finding things square with their principles afterwards!

But the crisis was a solemn one. First of all, in a tumult of conflicting feelings which gained power from the morbid influence of a lonely life,—"solitary confinement turns the brain,"—I thought I could not keep my ordination vow,—that I was demoralised for my office, so long as I was a single man: and now, the remedy I saw was a hazardous one. I might join myself to one who daily would tempt me from the paths of duty! I might repose in the lap of a Delilah, who would shear me of my strength! My dear mother's opinions of modern education—as a thing of the toes and fingers' ends, and very little of the head or the heart —all rushed upon my mind. Ellen, I knew, she would prize, while most of the young ladies around were her aversion; and as I thought what would be my mother's anxieties if she knew the great issue at stake, and how she would talk it over to my father, I could not but repeat audibly these beautiful words:—

"And Rebekah said to Isaac, I am weary of my life, because of the daughters of Heth; if Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth, *such as these which are* of the daughters of the land, what good shall my life do me?"

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I returned to Yatton parish, to Mrs. Weston's farm, and the untutored society and sentiments of Polly Gutter, very, very happy, because—engaged to Ellen Horley!

CHAPTER IX.

ARRANGING FOR MY MARRIAGE—MY WEDDING, AND SETTLING DOWN—AUNT AND HER MAID JOIN HOUSEKEEPING IN A NEW CURACY—CLERICAL VAGARIES—THE RICH MAN'S FUNERAL—OUR FAMILY COMPACT DOES NOT ANSWER.

At the passing of the New Poor Law, when prudence and preventive checks were to do everything, when some looked to lectures on political economy to make future John Hobsons delay putting up the banns with future Sally Browns—the instinct and erratic part of man and woman were often left out of those ingenious equations of the meal to the mouths and the babies to the pap.

Certainly, I ought not to have married without reasonable expectations. But what are "expectations?" What is "reasonable?"—An Irishman is happy on a hundred a-year, though only for one year: the labourer has no anxiety while he can see a week's wages a-head; but, in genteel life, few could eat with an appetite to-day, if wholly without provision for this day twelvemonths. My father said, "Wait for a living, and then wait one year after that to insure your life, and secure a capital." Aunt Charlotte said, "Ellen is such a good Christian girl, things must go well. I would strain a point—I would trust in Providence."

"Nonsense!" said my father; "that is only a specious way of saying 'chancing it.' This is not trusting Providence, it is tempting Providence. Pupils help a little, but ——"

"Pupils are always in the wife's way," said my mother. "Mrs. Worley tried it till there was an insane cousin to take care of, and then she was glad to change."

"Horrible," said Aunt Charlotte, "to turn a rectory first into a school, and then into a lunatic asylum!"

"Ellen is pretty well broken in," said my father; "she is kept as strict as a school-girl. And as to lunatics, her stepmother is most crazy."

"Yes," said Fanny, "Ellen cannot change for the worse; and as to Harry, he is moped to death."

"I am quite disappointed," said Aunt Charlotte. "Ordination has not altered Harry in the least. With all his good resolutions he is sentimental and nonsensical, like other people."

Yet, all the while, my aunt had a secret plan of her own. Her piety would find a sphere in my parish.—"The charming young clergyman" and her early disappointment were not forgotten."—She would like to "chew the cud of pleasures past," and enjoy the reflected sunshine of a happy couple.—She could help in the parish.—Her income would pay the housekeeping, and her maid Susan would "make herself generally useful."

The only thing wanted was a curacy with house and sole charge. My mind was then to be free from all possible care—my idea of "feeling settled" realised, and "Harry was to be such a minister —— so devoted—so exemplary that ——" that, in short, an Aunt Charlotte and a maid Susan should give the idea of quite a new order of Deaconesses in the Church.

Sister Emily (who, I said, never had a beau) caught at the plan; but Fanny quizzed it cruelly—she imagined my wedding tour, with Aunt Charlotte riding bodkin and Susan in the rumble.

Then she pictured us at home—Susan snubbing Ellen, and Aunt Charlotte expecting that, with all delicate attentions, the eldest should be served first. She was also very jocose about "love and lookers-on;" and said it were such an apology for a wedding, that Venus would turn up her nose and Master Cupid make faces at us.

However, we were both in love—over head and ears; and what mortal in love could ever see beyond the hour? The present is everything, the future nothing. Could I once clasp the loved one to my heart, all the troubles that could befall me seemed but as motes in those sunbeams, which were to cheer me for a life.—But, no poor creature, begging for money to put the bailiff from his doors, ever went with more sinking heart or stammering lips to tell his piteous tale, and mark the lights or shades each word would throw upon the brow, than I to break this plan to Ellen. What an offer! Not a home—but halves! Not be mistress of a house, not to call the maids her own, not ——. However, the story came out at last. Ellen heard it all with laughing, liquid eyes, and then, for the first time, midst tears and smiles, and kisses too, I heard how cruel was the state I had persuaded her to change.

She had been living without love—without affection—without any, the very least, response to the yearnings of a fond and throbbing heart. That heart was early taught to love: her dear mother, up to her sixteenth year, had been to her a sister, playfellow, and parent, too: and she, with that fond mother, had caught the sighs and shared the sorrows of affection chilled to icicles by a cold and selfish husband. Providence has hard blows for hard hearts. One day, of cruel and cutting speeches, that husband flung himself from his wife's presence and his home; ordered his portmanteau; where he was going wouldn't say; nor when, if ever, he should return. Thus savagely did he leave a tender woman to—for so it was—the pangs of labour: and instead of that soothing affection on which the youthful mother would repose, yearning as for nature's own support, he left her, pierced to the very soul—the wife—the woman lacerated—convulsively to sob and sigh alone!

Six days passed—an infant was announced still-born—the wife in extreme danger—all the neighbours were called on to conjecture how the husband could be found. "The husband only can save her," said the surgeon; "I cannot minister to a mind diseased. Send—in the name of mercy find him."—Two days Ellen saw her mother lie poised, as on the turning of a hair, between this world of sorrows and—she never doubted it—another world, to her of joys for evermore. Two days, poor Ellen heard her call on the cruel husband's name: "What have I done? What have I done?"—The doctor was an old, kind-hearted man; that husband's heartlessness he had long abhorred; and as long regarded this distracted mother with the pity that is akin to love. To every neighbour—and not one but galloped up from miles around to inquire—he made but one answer: "Find the husband, to speak some words of kindness and of comfort in her ear; though even that seems now too late." Every one that came vented their horror in words both loud and deep, and letters upon letters were written and a dispatch sent off, as each was eager to suggest some new address. Still, as the husband moved from place to place, no letter came to hand; when, one morning, opening the *Times*, he read among the deaths,—

"On the —— day, in child-birth, Ellen, the wife of Thomas Horley, Esq., of Bowdon Hall."

A volume could hardly tell the conflicting feelings of the guilty man, or the indignation of the neighbours. Neighbours, indeed! Every cottager, be sure, talked as he passed with "bated breath," and looked reproaches, or he fancied such. It is to Ellen our history must turn. There now was no one she could love; even

for her dearest mother she must weep in silence; for, every sob should touch her father to the heart. No doubt she had some female friends to let her pour forth her grief. This once or twice, perhaps; for there is a limit to such indulgence. All persons have sorrows of their own, and so are glad to make the most of any lull or calm, and can spare few tears for such as Ellen, more than for any tragedy on the stage. All doors are open to the happy and the prosperous, but the afflicted soon find that when their trouble has lost its novelty it has lost its charm, and has no more claim to throw a gloom upon a morning call.—"Don't walk this way, we shall meet poor Ellen: it makes me miserable to look on her—we can't comfort her."

So people say. But still they *could*. Grief can relieve itself in words, and so digest its sorrow and find diversion during those appointed hours of trial, while the warm gushes of the heart, of late thrown back upon their throbbing fountain, are struggling and gurgling for new channels.

Mr. Horley, after twelve months' "complimentary mourning"—most expressive term!—added to Ellen's other afflictions a step-mother. A step-mother, from the *injusta noverca* of Virgil and the more ancient "step-mother to ships"—for so Æschylus called the boisterous sea about Sebastopol—have had no enviable name. Very hard upon them. Step-daughters are no luxury. They talk saucily of their "Step," cast depreciating glances on their "old Pa," and, by looks at least, tell the lady—as proud of her conjugal degree as other ladies—she is an interloper, and they would rather have her room than her company.

This time Mr. Horley caught a tartar. "You can't break my heart, Mr. Horley," the lady once said, patting her stomacher; "it's in a very strong case, I can assure you. Yes, you may launch thunder from your tongue and flash lightning from your eyes, Mr. Horley; but all that goes for nothing. When you have done I shall have my little say." And her "little say" was something fearful. "Never ending, still beginning." Ellen would take a walk to escape it, and find her still at it when she returned. Why, she would bother a rookery. "Daren't strike me, Mr. Horley," and "I am afraid of no man's tongue," she would say; "and if I talk all night, you shall know my mind." "Fair—words—will—an—swer—best, Mis—ter—Horley," she would say, vexatiously. "I am like Queen Elizabeth to the 'Proud Prelate,' 'Yours as you demean yourself;' so please not to hoist your foul-weather flag. I've my mother's own proper spirit. When her first husband once smashed all the cups in his rage, she

smashed all the saucers. Poor dead Mrs. Horley! too good for this world. You should have had me *first*, Mr. Horley. Parcel of silly women! I gave my *hand* for a settlement; but my heart must have a heart in exchange, and that's more than Mr. Horley has got to offer. So far quits. You want a strong-minded and impulsive female to encounter you, Mr. Horley."

There was one beautiful sprig of the purest pearls, fit emblem of the pure heart of Ellen's mother, which used for many a year of sorrow to throb beneath it, while Ellen would rest on her lap, and feel and trace the several pearls with her curious little fingers. When older, she could discern the cruel cause that made those pearl flowers heave and tremble. Think not that Ellen's trials were little, because it was among the greatest to see that pearl upon another's breast.

With such a life, no wonder that Ellen, as my sisters said, looked aged. Trials that blanch the hair in a night soon blanch the cheek; and tears, as years, fret wrinkles, at those heart-wrenching times, when many dark chapters of the book of life are read and realised, and all got by heart in as many days. This was the history of the sober, the steady, the subdued, and — once to me — the unromantic Ellen.

Reader, you have felt a nipping, blighting day of early spring, when all creation is dark and chilled — when the violet and the crocus seem shrinking from your gaze, the birds are chary of their song, and the air not genial for your breath. Reader, you have felt, a few days later, a warm and glowing breeze from the south, when the buds open, the birds sing merrily, all nature seems teeming and expansive till "the valleys laugh and sing." — Such was the difference between the timid and disheartened Ellen, shrinking from the north-east aspect of the second Mrs. Horley, and Ellen all herself, her heart freely gushing, and her whole soul enlarged as she poured forth its generous emotions in the ear of one she dared to love.

My aunt's proposal she received with thankfulness. Her mother's fortune she knew must one day be hers, and I must inherit a little, too. She would make any effort — sacrifice there was none to make. Her present lot was one which resignation only made endurable; but, now that she had once suffered herself to look beyond, she felt it bitterness, indeed, to contemplate the same again. I must find another curacy and exchange letters in the meanwhile, with sometimes a visit home, and — hope and imagination should fill up the rest of the dreary void that separated her from me.

Behold me once more at Yatton — enjoying no more lively dissipation than Sunday dinners *tête-à-tête* with Mrs. Thomas, for, the Rector was ill, and kept his bed; the beginning of the end to him — passing long and lonely evenings, with an occasional word to Polly Gutter, and holding village dialogues under the blacksmith's shed, or threading my way up and down rather ladders than stairs to superannuated ploughmen and washerwomen. I had always two or three young persons in consumption to attend, as from sentence of death pronounced by the doctor to release from suffering by the hand of God. To these poor creatures I always spoke cheerfully, as if they lay under judgment of death with a merciful season of preparation.

This formed my life actually. But man lives two lives: one the present and the *actual*, of which he thinks but little; the other the *ideal* of a happy, hopeful future. This second life — the ideal life — now was mine, and I lived, or rather dreamed, in a state savouring very little of our plain prosaic existence. However, it was positive happiness while the spell remained unbroken. Writing or receiving letters from my Ellen was my recreation. When I received one of her treasured epistles I would carry it about in my pocket, and read it again and again, till it was creased all over like a beggar's petition. One day, Isaac Simpson caught me in the act down Froggy Lane, and said, "Now, sir, I guess that's from your sweetheart. I can always tell by a man's face when 'tis a bill." — The Church newspapers were also read by me, and by Ellen too, and even Aunt Charlotte and Susan were on the alert, and had learnt to inquire about preferment at every clerical decease or mention of a curacy. I had by this time taken Priest's orders, and cemented old clerical friendships and made new. It was then that I first heard of the declining health of that good, sanguine, earnest creature, the Rev. Arthur Griffin.

Poor old Griffin commenced life as Chaplain to the Lord Mayor of London. But he retained nothing of civic life but some pleasant stories. He had a soul above carving venison (once the Chaplain's post) and asking a blessing, as he said, on gluttony and drunkenness. The good man had done strange duties, in the absence of others, in the modern Babylon. He had even attended *living* men and women to the grave for passing forged one-pound notes; and, right happy was he to get the sound of St. Sepulchre's eight-o'clock bell out of his ears, and retire to the living of Greenside, in Dorsetshire.

If the Gospel is the "voice of good tidings," dear old Griffin's were the lips to proclaim it. He seemed himself so happy, as if

he were himself all the better for the mercy. He was a man who, by his cheerful serenity and goodness, appeared pre-eminently one "anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows"—a man of perfect sympathies. He knew all his flock, and called them all by their names. He was many a summons out of the pocket of the justice's clerk, and many a six-and-eightpence from the lawyer's: and, the story was told, that he once tossed a bunch of carrots to a poor donkey in the pound, and ate his own boiled beef with potatoes. But now he had a "sentence of death" in himself; his lungs were affected, and repose and change of air were prescribed, for, Greenside would not suit his constitution. No wonder: some of the rooms struck damp as a dungeon. Every folio on his shelves was stained by the damp, and my shoes soon turned mouldy in his closets.

We were not long in coming to an arrangement. His large rambling house of furniture and a hundred a-year, after mutual inquiries, were promised, with sole charge to me.

"You shall have the house all as it stands," he said. "I will not remove anything you can possibly make use of; so let us see what there is for you. These pigeon-holes have tracts, and 'Dairyman's Daughters,' and also prayers. Those prayers I am particular in pasting up somewhere in each cottage. Then there are about threescore of Testaments and Prayer-books—sell them cheap where you can, or pretend to sell them; they will be less valued if nothing is paid for them. Next, there is a lot of medicine in this cupboard—castor-oil, purgatives, and lowering medicines. But, let me caution you never to give lowering medicines with parish pay, for then they are lowered enough already. Also, there are five hot-water cases—for bellies full of raw turnips, sloes, or cider-apples, very useful. Nurse Gingham has four sets of baby-linen of mine—with odd blankets, and two pairs of crutches, and some bandages for broken heads."

In this way we went round the house. When we had sat down in the study the old man said, "One thing I wish—I wish you had been here before. My curate, Hixon, did play such games. Bad workmen find fault with their tools. Instead of old things practicable, Hixon was always after new. He wanted to push on the clock of time, and had no idea of fitting his fancies to the stage of civilisation; for, you will find them next to savages, poor creatures, with cabins instead of houses, no decency, and quite in a state of nature. Hixon tried platform-meetings, deputations, converting the blacks at the antipodes instead of the whites round the corner, to say nothing of foreign charities for warming-pans

to the West Indies, and all kinds of moonshine schemes: but—you'll hear all about him. He meant well, I allow. But, take my advice, young man, take care of your own parish first; though, some one missionary scheme will help your parish—creating an interest and realising Gospel blessings. Your Bible and Prayer-book, if your heart's in the cause, is all the machinery you will want. Mind the school, you'll do most with the young. Hixon has tried the agricultural plans, and maid-servant-training plans, and all kinds of plans he ever chanced to hear of: but you'll see—you'll see before you have been here many days."

The Rev. James Hixon was, as the Americans say, a "caution" to a man, and a caution much wanted. His plain duty was to read, to preach, and to exhort, to visit the sick, and to teach the children. Instead of that, Mr. Hixon did everything else he could think of. While seeming to seek God's glory he sought his own. His motive was not piety, but ambition. He wasted his time, if not with sports of the field, with sports of fancy. His views were of that enlarged kind, which rested only on great schemes and extensive organisations: he aspired to some world-wide system, revolving round himself as the centre. And the result was, he was so busy about preaching the Gospel to all the world, that he might have lived and died without improving one single person in it. Shakspeare says, very beautifully:—

> "To thine own self be true,
> And it shall follow, as the night the day,
> Thou canst not then be false to any man."

"Be yourself religious," and you will not catch at every novelty that offers something more interesting than plain parochial duties.

The Tempter sets before us baits ecclesiastical as well as secular. Time was when balls, and hunts, and amusements of all kinds were the best of baits; but now the hook must be better covered—"In vain is a net spread in the sight of any bird." Conscience touches a man when he is doing nothing at all, or nothing clerical. Accordingly,—

Bait the first was a platform-meeting, a deputation to entertain, speeches to get up, and country visits to make to collect the people. Many weeks of dissipation may be caused in this way. A most insidious bait was this, because not one of our excellent societies could apparently make its cause known without such meetings. But, all depends upon the time, place, and motive;

and, Greenside was as little ripe for such meetings as it is for the Philosophical Association.

Bait the second was an agricultural school. Here were farmers to consult, other seed than the "word" to sow, and visible crops instead of invisible.

Bait the third was the churchyard to level, the church to renovate, painted glass, mediæval curiosities, and the like.

In short, every ingenuity was exercised by poor Mr. Hixon, to provide himself with something as like clerical duty in sound, but as unlike it in sense and savour, as anything possibly could be.

Bait the fourth was a system of clerico-political meetings, the clergy meeting periodically in chapters, agitating Church questions and the rights of the Church; that is to say, the rights of gentlemen, like Mr. Hixon, to the same political influence, and to command the same confidence in the Legislature, as, in my belief, we should very readily command, if we all stood before the laity in the winning attitude of the good Mr. Griffin. The Church has duties as well as rights, and the shortest way to obtain the one is to discharge the other. I have seen some fifty clergymen drawn away from their parishes, with an archdeacon at their head, to vote, protest, or speechify, and append fifty names to a sheet of foolscap. I have seen this many times these last twenty years, and perhaps never without hearing plain people say—and say truly, as the results showed—"They had better be minding their parishes."

"I'll tell you what," said the old man, as he stirred up his glass of negus, "people say 'The Church is in danger.' Hixon was always saying, 'The Church is in danger.' Yes, in danger, I could have said, from such as you. When I was young, the steady serious clergy used to work, and the good-for-nothing used to hunt and shoot: but now, even the steady are beguiled by hobby-horses, hunt shadows, and fire away with blank cartridge and clerical flash-in-the-pan. And this is the worst kind of idleness of the two by a great deal; because, it is the most hopeless and the most insidious. These Mr. Hixons do 'their own will under pretence of their Master's will.' They don't learn the page that is set them, but the very next: like the wayward child. So the Church *is* in danger: when the clergy are losing weight and laughed at, as they ever will be, when every man's views are in the future and in the distance—and the more talk the less work. There was a good old Puritan proverb, that 'The way to make a clean town is for every man to sweep before his own door;' so, the

way to make a pure Church is for every man to mind his own parish."

And here I say of clerical meetings and open expressions of social rights, not that they do no good, but that for the last twenty years I have seen them do no little harm. Once start a young clergyman in a career of politics, or put him on the bench of magistrates, and the natural man begins to breathe again. Once more I say, *A man may be half a doctor, or half a lawyer, but he cannot be half a minister of Christ.* The Tractarians have re-published this truth, which the Evangelical party were the first to enunciate. Young clergymen, it is true, want amusements as they want food. If the Apostle said, "Take a little wine for thy stomach's sake," we may as reasonably say, "Take a little diversion for thy brain's sake," and a mere walk is not always *diversion.*

Still, the mind of a minister must be wholly devoted to his duty, and his recreations must be, as the term implies, the means of sending him back refreshed and strengthened the better to discharge that duty. The clergy must be men to "adorn" the Christian doctrine, and ensamples of godly life. Personal piety is "the one thing needful:" without it the lips speak, but not the heart. This is the faith that "removes mountains" of difficulty. Men great in this faith and piety may or may not have votes, but they always must have influence.

The following is no uncommon case. A clergyman is ordained to a parish, and finds the life before him one of severe self-denial and of a kind of labour quite new, and not always quite congenial, to the tastes and habits of his college days. Accordingly, the struggle commences between his pleasure and his duty,—the enjoyment of this world, and preparing sinners for a world to come: still, he sees no choice but to persevere: he has too much conscience wilfully to desert the post of duty, and after a little practice he is encouraged at finding that the quiet routine of parish duty has pleasures of its own.

All of a sudden, he receives a visit from a certain bustling set of clergy, who are found on every platform and public meeting, and take upon themselves to represent "the Church" in their locality—men who have a motion to make at every public meeting, and an amendment to every motion which does not originate in themselves. They inform our young friend that "his rights and privileges are in danger—some Bill must be opposed—the clergy want a regular organisation for their voices to be heard," and the like. The poor man is quite refreshed at the sound, and

before long finds the new work so much more to his liking than the old that he turns clerical politician, and dreams of "the Church," but forgets his parish. The result is a character utterly devoid of all that devotion and piety which alone carry the word to the heart—utterly devoid, too, of that moral influence which commands the confidence of any Parliament.

Every member of the Legislature daily sees some ten of the clergy residing around him. Every member knows whether the word or the world lies deeper in the hearts of those ten. And in proportion as they see the clergy like old Mr. Griffin, in that proportion will they lose that jealousy with which, it cannot be denied, they now regard the claims of the Church.

Look at our 17,300 clergy; or, which is more easy, look at the first twenty of them around you. How many of these twenty produce an impression as ministers of Christ? How many are mere Church dignitaries? how many are mere country gentlemen? I am sorry to say that, though all would like to count as "the Church," when there's any privilege to be enjoyed, some are very little of the Church as regards any distinctive character that they maintain.

"But," continued the Rector, after awhile, "you are going to be married. I leave Jane—she has been twelve years with me—a capital servant for you; she knows the characters of all the parish—my factotum, quite. Pray keep her. She would break her heart at leaving Greenside: for, Jane is as devoted to the people as I am myself."

To this I readily agreed, and informed Ellen by that day's post of what a treasure of a servant I had secured. The Rector's Jane and my aunt's Susan would, no doubt, be invaluable together.

I was now in the highest spirits—Ellen had only to name the day, and Aunt Charlotte to settle with her landlord and prepare to move from Blindham. My sister Emily—for I would not have Fanny; Fanny quizzed too much, and wasn't sympathetic—came to help me to put all to rights, and to ensure the most comfortable reception for my bride. Emily routed out every corner from kitchen to garret. I remembered afterwards, that the first night she thought that somebody smelt strong of gin. However, since there was no one but Jane to smell, the observation passed unheeded. In six weeks all bridal preparations were made, and the happy day dawned at last. We were made a spectacle and a gazing-stock in the usual way. While at the altar, Ellen stood within one flag-stone of her mother's grave!

The marriage service alone was quite enough to make us

realise the most critical moment of our lives. Still we had to sit up at breakfast and stand the heartless, gaze of four-and-twenty, chiefly old fogies, people of more fashion than feeling, and most wicked unbelievers in all pure affection. I felt their brazen looks were truly painful as they sat continually staring at my dear motherless bride, and then—as if it were no trial for a sensitive mind to leave the home of her childhood, and a scene so hallowed by the memory of one no more—she had to run the gauntlet of Vanity Fair to the carriage, and to give each of the four-and-twenty one stare more.

It was now the month of August, and as Ellen had never seen Oxford, our "Sentimental Journey" I resolved to make yet happier by the interest she would feel in all my haunts in days gone by, and the delight with which I should revive associations past. Oxford is retirement itself in the long vacation. We had the place all to ourselves: so, we sauntered about the College gardens, and astonished no one but the blackbirds: though, in term time, Ellen would have been looked at like the Queen. Every old haunt, I felt, I must see with Ellen. On Cowley Green and Bullingdon we walked together, and I pointed out, "Here was our tent, and here the Cricket-ground; here men shouted as I hit about the Christ-Church bowling; there stood the hurdles leaped so often upon Oxford hacks."

Some other evening, I would row her down the river, and describe the boat-races, and my heart and Ellen's would beat with excitement as I described the tearing struggle of a dozen eight-oars, and the "bumps" and the starting—"Are you all ready, gentlemen?" Yes, and the false starts, too—"No—no—wait a bit." Some one used always to be crying "wait," even when the pistol was fired to start us. Of course, we went to the Duke of Marlborough's, and I told the story of Charlie Lane and his notions of modern history; for, Charlie thought the battle of Blenheim was fought in Woodstock Park. In this way we passed a week in quiet lodgings in St. John Street. Indeed, we wanted quiet, both of us. For the days that precede a wedding make me think, with Ovid,—

"Love is a matter full of anxious fear."

There are many persons who imagine that courtship ending with the wedding-day is as one mantling cup of bliss, gradually filling till it foams over. But Ellen declares that the meddling and interference, and the impudent advice of morning callers—the doubts and dampers from those who throw cold water upon

everything—the nervous and superstitious feeling that something will happen to prevent, and the haggling about settlements, all kept her in one painful state of hurry and flurry to the last moment. Besides this, she said it seemed very hard, but she was made to feel quite secondary in the preparations, as if her wedding was the mere occasion for Mrs. Horley's display and party, and something for her to talk of; quite as if our happiness were wholly beside the question, and as if the interesting couple were the mere Punch and Judy to amuse the guests, who seemed to think themselves very important, entirely devoted to their own amusement.

The honeymoon was already in its last quarter—for, I could be absent only a parson's week of thirteen days. Aunt Charlotte and Susan had joined Emily at the Rectory, and had taken possession: and Susan and Jane had also begun to exchange their confidences, and Jane had not failed to represent herself as a kind of woman in possession of master's goods and chattels, and one who "knew what's what," and if other people didn't like their situation they might go!

This Ellen heard from Emily, and Emily hinted there were peculiar difficulties resulting from taking old servants. Susan, she had heard, was aunt's mistress, ruling her on an approved system of sulks and frowns, and short answers: and since aunt, like other old maids, for lack of real troubles, made up in fidgets and fancies in herself, what she was spared in rickets and measles in possible babes; and since aunt also thought that Susan alone could stand between her and constant hysterics, our domestic entanglements seemed anything but easy of solution. However, we tried to laugh it off, and said all would shake right no doubt.

Now, it may seem strange that so slight a matter could affect the happiness of so blissful a season; but the truth is, that we both began to feel anxious for the end of the honeymoon. For, whenever there is a difficulty, it is hard to rest till we grapple with it, and turn the goblin into thin air.

And now, all Greenside was expecting the young couple. If we were Mrs. Horley's puppets before, we were doomed to swell "Mrs. Jane Hayward's" parochial consequence now. So, Jane marshalled the school-children; Jane ordered out the ringers; Jane made an arch of evergreens; Jane also ordered a cask of beer for all *her party* to drink our health. My dear aunt was horrified, and proposed tea; but, before the torrent of Mrs. Jane Hayward's energies, both aunt and Susan bent as stubble before

the wind, and the surging billows of Mrs. Hayward, now flanked with many a noisy partisan, passed clean over them both.

Words cannot describe how cruel was this trial to that dear good lady. My poor aunt had dreamt of this hour as the happiest moment of her life. She had lived for this hour, ever since our first engagement. Her kind heart had throbbed with emotion as she thought of the moment when she should soberly and piously thank God that she had been the means, for once in her life, in this vale of misery, of bidding two dear young people share her home and be happy.

The hardest thing to command or devise, for yourself or others in this uncertain world, is one happy hour. You may provide the viol, the tabret, and the dance, and make every arrangement for joy and merriment, but the least thing will put it all out of tune and harmony: so, this boisterous, good-for-nothing jade, was ordained to break the happy spell, and to rob the generous lady of her reward. For, no sooner did we reach the village than a vulgar noisy mob—as Susan said, "all the scum and scurf of Greenside"—took the horses from the carriage and dragged us, swaying dangerously from side to side, down the lane to the Rectory.

There stood "Mrs. Hayward," with her arms a-kimbo, very red in the face, in a wonderful state of excitement, filling up the doorway, so that poor aunt, and even Susan, were peeping, nervous and confounded, over her shoulder; and Mrs. Hayward was the first to pronounce the *fiat* of her welcome and admission into the Rectory of Greenside.

I was too much flattered at the time by Jane's good intentions, as I thought, to say much of her peculiar way of honouring us, though I did find Mrs. Hayward exceedingly hard to shake off that evening: still I hoped, when the exciting day had closed, all would go well. Ellen was tired by the journey and overpowered by my aunt's kind preparations, so all this tumult gave her pain. However, she set herself to compose the good lady, and said how happy she should be in such a home; and as soon as I had dispersed the people from the door, and made a short speech on the occasion, we enjoyed what aunt had prepared for us, and then all retired to rest.

When Ulysses, after all his wanderings, joined his Penelope at last, Homer tells us that they did not go to sleep till they had talked over all their trials. Just so did I and Ellen. Woman has one sense more than man; and Ellen's intuitions told her there was something wrong with aunt, and we should hear more

of Mrs. Hayward. This proved too true. Aunt had smelt gin as well as Emily, but thought that gin it could not be; but Susan thought nothing more likely, and while aunt's thoughts were yet in an unsettled and fluid state, Susan churned them into pats, and told her mistress how "that pious parson's maid was fond of drink."

What! this confidential servant of the Rectory! What! she who acted as private secretary or clerk, and spared the good old man so much needless interruption! She who presented the petitions of some, and answered "No good" to others—this parochial Lady Chamberlain fond of vulgar gin! It could not be!

However, two days after I sallied out to consult Will Atfield, a small farmer and publican. Atfield heard my cautious kind of question and let me tell my sad suspicions, and then laughed outright and said, "Well, sir, I wins my glass of grog and no mistake! Old master was no match for Jinny. She has such a smooth tongue—and, what's more, she can talk better and straighter when she's drunk than many can. So master couldn't see it, and no one dared tell him. She's the terror of the place, is Jinny Hayward. No poor body could get a message to master that didn't treat or flatter Jinny; but I bet Will Jones a glass of grog that in one month you'd find her out."

"But is she really addicted to drink?"

"Yes, sir. Jinny not only likes a drop, as you and I might, but she's what we call 'a reg'lar wet soul,' and an uncommon bad'un, in all ways; and till she's clear of the place you'll do no good whatever!"

In three days, I was more than satisfied of this unpleasant truth, and Mrs. Jinny was sent bag and baggage out of Greenside. When once a favourite falls, all honeyed lips spout gall, and I was forcibly reminded of Juvenal's account of the disgrace of Sejanus—every one who so late had trembled at the name must have a fling at him; so Jinny's misdeeds were made the most of for a month. This was a warning to me to use my own eyes and ears, and to let no such confidant stand between me and my parishioners for the future.—Many a parish has a Jinny Hayward, male or female, the pest or the terror of the whole neighbourhood.

We were now quite cheerful. Aunt was herself again, and set about in earnest to make my study sacred to sermons, and to act lady-visitor without. Her only mistake was, that she kept forgetting I had a wife; and after pushing Ellen into the background she would remember, with a burst of apologies to the bride, and half an hour after do the same again.

I was now apprehensive of something unpleasant occurring. I knew that a young wife could be jealous even of a sister or of an old nurse, and I found it would not do at all to quote my aunt on all occasions. Already she was becoming a bugbear, and one of Ellen's spirit would rather part with a finger than be robbed of the full honours of a bride.

Accordingly, I prevailed on Ellen to agree to give up to aunt a certain portion of the parish duties, reserving the housekeeping in-doors, and quite as much out of doors, as she could manage for herself.

All seemed smooth once more. Aunt sallied forth on her message of mercy day after day, and inquired so sympathetically into the wants of the people, that they soon found enough to keep her charity in practice. Every one pretended to be thankful for her tracts; though it afterwards appeared not one in two could read them. Every one was proud of the lady's visit, and, by degrees, scarcely any pleaded guilty to possessing coals, blankets, soap, candles, gruel, or any of the necessaries of life.

Morning and noon, aunt was full of her discoveries. She said it was most providential she had come. How they existed before, she did not know. Every day she alone had put the wolf from the door. First of all, only one wife was in tears from bad usage, but now, "shocking bad husbands" was a general complaint. A head was out at every door, as the well-meaning lady passed along, and she often found Molly Sweet listening to hear what she promised Betty Gripe. Jealousy raged like a plague. She couldn't "do what she would with her own." It was "Please, ma'am, you gave she twice as much." And soon each denial threatened impudence; and passion let out truth. "Please, ma'am, Grace Smith have a werry good husband. 'Tis she as puts gin in her tea."—"Aye, and when John have come home with the backache, Sall's beer is many a meal out of he's inside."—"Yes, ma'am, and Hannah Hill com'd over you. She told me as your pretty tract was only good for a kettle-holder."

Of course the village was becoming pauperised. "Yes," said Mr. Elways, the surgeon, "this is worse than the feoffee money"—a legacy of 100*l.* a-year distributable by the churchwardens. And so it was. The Rectory was beset with ragged women and children—one held a half-pint cup for "some jelly, please;" another had brought a quart bottle for wine, and a third had a red pitcher for soup. The "heart-rending demands" were an increasing quantity, and poor aunt's income was a stationary one; so, in spite of her exertions, the poverty seemed more and more

a-head of her pence, and the good woman was becoming quite ill from excitement.

I told the doctor of our difficulty, and he promised his assistance to open aunt's eyes, and also to provide a better field for her charity. He came with his wife to tea, and we broached the subject of the "*fi*-fee money," and "the art of doing good." "Why was John Bell behindhand with his rent?" said Mr. Elways. "Why did Kate Horn come to grief?—Simply because one year they had the fi-fee money; and these rotten reeds, the fi-fees, were ever after their sole dependence."

"Yes," said Mr. Elways, "the feoffees divide from 2*l.* to 5*l.* each among from twenty to fifty parishioners. Sometimes the same people receive year after year, sometimes only once. So, to have once had fi-fee money, damps the self-dependence of five persons where it enriches one. Yes, this is quite a valuable experiment in economics. It is sowing dragons' teeth, is this parish legacy; for, the most fiendish jealousy arises. You observed how Cawson scowled and looked daggers at old Camp when preferred to him. Indeed," added Mr. Elways, "the feoffees' own labourers are always chosen. A bargain has been made to sell the pig for so much, with 'a good word to the fi-fees.' So, the seller looks to the feoffees to pay him for his pig. In other words, directly or indirectly, one-half the money finds its way into the feoffees' own pockets, and the other half breeds poverty, malice, and all bad feelings."

This was a lesson for the lady-visitor, who now agreed to limit her visits to objects recommended by myself and the doctor. She now learnt that true charity helps people to help themselves, and that she should never induce the poor to calculate on her assistance. My rule was to inquire what persons have parish pay; for, they are sure to be living on "half diet."

Ellen was amiably devoted to old people. We had every Sunday twelve interesting specimens of longevity, who could number about 1000 years between the party. These venerable guests we regaled on soup, thickened with meat and rice; because no one had a full complement of teeth, and some had no teeth at all. Daniel Fry was Ellen's great amusement. He was called "the errand-boy," though aged eighty! and he would actually fetch and carry twenty miles on an occasion. We also had a Clothing Club—taking in the pennies periodically, and returning the same with a bonus in clothes at Christmas. By all these means I endeavoured to maintain a character for liberality without giving money when called to visit.

It occurred to me as a very strange coincidence that the same Moll Pounce—a woman who had always an excuse for not being at church, and no favourite with the people—was so often the messenger with "Please, sir, to visit poor So-and-so. She is werry bad, and has nothing to make use of: a drop o' wine or the like o' that would do her a world of good." The truth was, she always cried halves; and, however poor the patient, Moll Pounce acted nurse while the victuals lasted. Ellen named her the "Vampyre," and others called her the "Bloodsucker." I can never forget the woman. She had an evil-blighting eye and withering scowl, and would have been burned for a witch in the olden time. Many a time has that woman called on me for my prayers as a pretence, when all she wanted was my purse.

Such characters always spring up under a bad system of acting minister and almoner at the same time. Still, make what rule you will, sometimes you will feel compelled to break it.—Imagine a man with a death's chill upon him pointing to the grate and asking for sticks, and saying, "I have nothing but *cold* water, sir!" Imagine the craving subject of a draining ulcer asking for such food as could alone replace her wasting flesh! Ay, and see heroic endurance, patience, and self-denial—like the eagle feeding her young with her own blood, till the parson's heart is probed and tried at every pore for a soft and yielding corner; you will then understand the trials of a poor curate in "sick-visiting." Sometimes it has seemed to me a mockery to pray and not to relieve. The dull and drooping eye seems to look and to remonstrate, "You have food and clothing, but I am starving."

Ah, my young friends, take care you never have this on your conscience, that you have been less frequent with your prayers, having exhausted all your alms! Take care that you don't delay a visit to find a corpse!

One day I urged a sick girl to communicate. There was no seeming danger for a year at least. She said, "I will, next week." I urged her to name the morrow. "No, sir, when you return; I can't till then. Pray don't ask me, I am not alone. But please come this day week."

I did so, and heard—"Is it Mary Turner you want to see, sir? Please, sir, she wouldn't keep. She was buried Tuesday."—What would my feelings have been, had this been *my* delay! Death is an awful answer. How presumptuous to think that the Almighty should bide the time of man! "He being dead yet

speaketh." Nor is there anything like the silence of death to point reproaches to the guilty heart.

Poor Mary Tanner was an interesting person. She would give you some clue to her fears and feelings. But this is comparatively rare in sick-visiting. I have gone from one room to another for a whole morning, and read and prayed to persons with scarcely a glance of intelligence or response. I always tried to have the friends in the room, and I am quite sure that I could not be seen visiting in my parish without striking notes of warning in some hearts as I passed along. There is many a sermon even in the church-bell; and as to our towers and spires dotted in the landscape, no one can tell how many impressions we owe to "those silent fingers pointing to the skies."

Neither is visiting among the higher circles always an unqualified satisfaction. I saw no little of this kind of visiting one winter at Torquay. There I saw the ball-room dissipation, with reckless waste of health and strength—late hours—rooms hot to suffocation, and relieved by open windows pouring in the wind of a winter's night on bare necks and low dresses, thin as gossamer—all this I saw, even among the families who had brought some poor girl to die. The Rev. —— once preached a sermon on this mockery and "dance of death."

Suppose the case of a clergyman called in to such a family as this. I think I now see the pale, hectic countenance of a poor girl, half-reclining on a sofa. But how am I to begin?—because on either side the fire is sitting a fine lady, all false curls and crinoline. Here we see the vanities of this world and the realities of the world to come. Ladies rouged and feathered on a bright court-day find the sun rather intrusive, and a little too matter-of-fact. You want false light for false things; and, a fellow-creature in a consumption always throws a very steady glare on the tinsel and frippery of this world's stage. It often makes me think of the lady overtaken at her toilet—"the corpse dressed for a ball!"

The only way to overcome my difficulty was to say I found it advisable to see the sufferer alone, and that after a time I would summon as many as pleased to the usual prayers.

But I am still at Greenside. Ellen was a diligent attendant at the school, cutting out and basting needle-work, and acting Goody Thomas with the Testament. Our aunt was unwearied. Her faith and fervour made me as much ashamed of my lukewarm piety as Lady Oxton's Scripture knowledge did of my theology.

But the boys' school on Mr. Hixon's "agricultural afternoons" was her perplexity, and mine too. There you saw a troop of little urchins helter-skelter, with rakes and spades, and some ten pulling at a low cart to hold turnips and potatoes — the poor master bawling in vain for order.

One day I remarked in the field to the said schoolmaster:—

"There is not much work done yet, I think, for so many of you — eh, Mr. Softy?"

"Many, sir? What good's them brats? — I does the work. I does it all myself — they's only in the way — a-tripping of me up."

"Did you finish that gate you were set to paint?" I added.

"That ere blessed gate, sir? — Them climbed on it afore it was dry, and Tom Bolter I put the stick on for daubing Harry's pinny. I told Mr. Hixon as this scheme would never work. 'Haggricultural's all my eye,' says Bolter's mother. ''Tis digging and hoeing, and nothing else, so no lies about the matter. It is a downright shame to serve us so. Why don't ye keep 'em to their books, and larn 'em something? Bill shall dig my taties afore ever he digs the parson's — I'm sharp enough for that.'"

Mrs. Bolter was not long in seeking reparation at the Rectory. Ellen promised her a new pinny; so, as there was no more painting to do, there seemed an end of that. But next week, returning late to dinner, I found aunt and Ellen and Susan all in a state of great excitement.

"There's been more 'haggricultural' work," said Susan — "such a noise, and missus 'most in hysterics — much as I could do to comfort her." The tale soon came out. The mangel-wurzel wanted hoeing; the boys were buried among the leaves and stalks like hounds in a furze-brake, and came out caked with mud and dripping wet. Instead of drying them, three of the mothers walked them straight down to the Rectory and made the noise aforesaid. Poor Softy came next, and said he would rather give his place up than stand such strife of tongues. Besides, he could not walk down the village but every farmer's boy gibed at his school for farming.

This ended Mr. Hixon's "haggricultural arternoons."

One effect of our school and college education is to lead us to undervalue plain mother-wit, that has never been sharpened on the grindstone academical. Our sexton, Simon Baines, taught me my mistake; he also taught me how men did not always die

when the Union doctor said they ought; but that the candle of life—which still flared and flickered in spite of the draughts of cottage-life from the cradle to the fiftieth year—took rather a strong gust to blow it out afterwards. I used, when first I was ordained, to read the prayer as for one "whose dissolution draweth nigh," very frequently; and this prayer I once read for Simon, though years before it was required.

Well, one day young Willie Baines came wiping his eyes with his smock-frock, and said, "Father was going to die—his head was swelled as big as a bushel basket—doctor gave him up—and father had done nothing but talk a pack o' nonsense all that morning."

I was soon at father's door. A small thatched cowshed, divided into two by a rough plank division, was the house: a ticking stuffed with leaves was the bed—and on that lay the Greenside sexton.

It soon appeared that Simon had an attack of erysipelas, which had produced an inflammation of the brain; and the "pack o' nonsense" was the talk of a sick man lightheaded. The only chance, it seemed, was to keep him perfectly free from excitement; so I put all the family out of the room, and the wife agreed that no one should go in to disturb him.

Early next morning I went off to see Simon, musing on the idea of

> The desolator desolate, the victor overthrown,
> The *digger of so many graves now coming to* his own.

I quietly opened the door, and asked in an undertone, "How is Simon this morning?" "Please, sir, come in and see him," said Hannah, in a shrill and wiry key. "How are you, Simon?" I said softly. Simon made some reply, but in so low a tone that I remarked, "He is very much weaker—is he not? His voice is quite faint." "Nor, sir, nor," said Hannah; "'taint that, but there was so much company all the arternoon, cos Simon seemed a-dying: they talked him hoarse, they did."

About a fortnight after, one cold November day, Susan announced that I was wanted in the churchyard, to settle some dispute about a grave.

My first thought was, Then Simon is dead at last! But no, Simon was there alive, and clamouring, with a white cloth about his head and face that made him look more corpse-like than ever. "I am not fit to be here, sir—not a bit; I'm more fit to be in

that there grave," he said, pointing below: "only they did keep such a noise I was forced to come and settle it."

This he said standing by an open grave, and using no little eloquence to persuade Farmer Woollen that the grave opened for Betsy Small was the Small's, and nothing near the Woollen's grave. This Woollen denied, and stoutly maintained that his father's bones were those thus ruthlessly disturbed. He even handled a thigh-bone with much filial indignation: and though the said bone might have belonged to any other body, still, as they say "seeing is believing," it carried weight with the crowd.

How was I to settle the dispute? To tell the truth, I knit my brows with concentrated essence of thought as I approached the grave, ambitious, by remarking sex of skeleton, or apparent age, or time of burial, to show the superior wisdom of the Church. But all in vain. Nothing could I make out of it, still less stop the quarrel.

Words waxed warmer. The farmer laid down the law with his supposed paternal thigh-bone, and Simon found that numbers were taking part against him: for, anything so demonstrative as this bone seemed, he sought in vain on his side. At last Simon was well-nigh condemned to fill up the Woollen grave, to replace the scattered bones, and hide his diminished head as a false pretender to all mortuary lore, when all of a sudden a bright thought flashed from beneath Simon's beetling brows.

"I'll soon tell ye," he cried out: "I'll show ye—every mother's son of ye—a set of gaping, stupid, nasty, make-believe chaps, to think to talk to sich as me!" he said, groping among the mould at every epithet.—"But, I say, I'll let ye see. There!" holding up a bit of the coffin, "what d'ye call that? Oak—oak—Farmer Woollen! this be oak!" Still, I could not see the logic of the matter. "Yes, oak! Now your father was buried by the parish," he said, with a sarcastic thump in the ribs, "and we all knows they don't give oak. This ain't no grave o' yourn."

This turned the tide of popular opinion in a moment. Farmer Woollen was crest-fallen and Simon was triumphant, and so happy in the victory that I had some trouble to make him go home and take care of himself.

Few stories of Old Bailey evidence beat this. I couldn't help feeling that a man is not necessarily sharper for being born a gentleman.

I hastened home in high glee, to amuse Ellen and my aunt with so diverting a tale, when, to my great surprise, Ellen opened

the door to me in tears, and Susan I saw slinking away down the passage. What could be the matter? What sad news was I to hear?

I led Ellen speechless into the study. She locked the door: for aunt, not understanding the ways of young married people, used to run in and out, all over the house.

The distressing truth now came out—Ellen was at issue with my aunt. Susan had been gradually encroaching, like another Jinny Hayward, and Ellen had stood upon her rights as a married woman, and told aunt that Susan should leave the house. Servants have a contempt for poverty, and Susan had let poor Ellen know that she had told all the parish that missus paid the way, and "you was nobodies." Reflection told Ellen that we had little but aunt's purse to depend upon; also, that I was bound to her both by affection and gratitude, and that my mother had warned us both before we married, that we were taking, not only each other, but aunt and Susan also, "for better and for worse."

Aunt I found "in hysterics," talking of ingratitude—of all her hopes of happiness being blighted—and declaring that Susan was necessary to her very existence.

I had seen the storm brewing for some time. Aunt's money distanced Ellen in the parish: aunt's mind, energy, and experience ruled within-doors: for, as surely as lead will sink and cork will swim, so surely will the stronger nature always rule. Perhaps I had made bad worse by quoting and preferring aunt's opinion on all occasions. This alone tried Ellen's spirit very hard. But when the maid took the cue from her mistress and thrust Ellen into the background, too—at first with pouts and leers and tosses of the head, and at length with downright impudence—the thing became quite unbearable.

I felt deeply pained and utterly perplexed. What to decide I knew not, but, as sometimes happens, fortune cut the knot; for, hearing this saucy maid—an old servant is often the most insulting tyrant imaginable—pass the room, impulse and indignation supplied the place of reasoning, and, without waiting to consult my aunt, I called the offender in and shut the door. I briefly asked her what boxes she had and what wages were due, for in one hour's time she should leave the house. In this, my indignant feelings were so far supported by those of Ellen, that Miss Susan saw she might as well resist or reason with a whirlwind; so she soon realised her mistake, and eventually made such humble apologies as gave my wife the upper hand. I then was in a better position to approach my aunt.

Painful and distracted were the feelings of that morning. At length aunt said she would try to think no more of what had passed — she had heard "that a divided rule rarely promised peace, and that young married people were best alone; for, many a blunder in the game of life would pass unheeded but for lookers-on."— And so, by help of a good average quantity of kisses and sal volatile, we were all composed, and spent a quiet, though an awfully silent and punctilious evening.

The charm was now broken. The good woman had received a blow. From that hour she felt that she was one too many. I did all I could; but when I began to give my confidence to a wife I found it impossible to be the same to my aunt. The kind lady now found out her mistake. In joining the young couple together, she had given us each our toy, and we wanted to play in our own way.

It is very painful to look back to those times, but the good woman's presence became daily more irksome. She was all prudence, all rule and method; our home was of the Reformatory or House-of-Correction kind. We felt her curb at every spirit, her safety-drag for ever clogged our wheels. She was an excellent woman, I admit: but who could bear a constant Mrs. Trimmer? In the game of life, like other games, half the fun consists in finding out the puzzle by yourself. We began to sympathise with the child who complained that "good ways happened to be so nasty, and naughty ways were so nice." Our life was so insipid. We were gulping down whole days without enjoying them, and thought of the alderman who exclaimed over his turtle, "You most unconscionable fellow, your remark made me swallow a large piece of green fat without tasting it!"

Aunt and I did very well together while I was single, but how could I blow hot and cold at the same time? What young bride would be flattered by no more ardour than would suit the temperature of sixty-two? In one sense there is nothing so selfish as love. Dr. Chalmers wrote a celebrated sermon on "the expulsive influence of a new affection:" my affection for Ellen gradually drove poor aunt out of the house. Fanny's quiz had come true: "aunt expected in all delicate attentions to share and share alike." In short, aunt was jealous of Ellen's influence, and Ellen was jealous of hers.—Really, I did all I could to make things pleasant; but a woman soon perceives when a man is ill at ease.

Like other persons with minds ever recurring to the same painful subject, I was glad to provide varied news at every meal;

and now, the strange vagaries of a noted Tractarian were the theme of every country paper and of every morning call.

The Rev. J. Walters, of Wanley, was setting up crucifixes, confessing ladies, Romanising his chapel, and at last had suffered a large secession to Rome. While he kept obstinately urging that his doctrine was a perfect antidote to Popery, it awkwardly happened to give a dozen people that very complaint.

My aunt, just then, was horrified at the name of Popery. Her favourite preacher found, like others, that it was hard to be eloquent without some one to oppose, and hard to be amusing without some horror or novelty on which to harp. The Tractarians were a fortune to him; and every fifth of November he used to rake up old enormities against the Roman Catholics, and he would talk of resisting them at the hazard of the fire and the stake, well knowing that the trials of modern martyrs are limited to "a silver tea-pot and the rest in money." It is very strange that any clergyman should be found reckless of exaggeration when on behalf of the truth! But so it was, and her imagination was haunted with a vision of Romanism flapping its black wings over all the land.

Some such warnings were much wanted, but at this time certain preachers could talk of nothing else.

I happened to have an engagement near Wanley, about ten miles from Greenside, and promised to reconnoitre and inquire into the truth of these reports. Next day I was within a mile of this city of the Pope, when I met a man with Romanism in his coat, Popery in his collar, and a cigar in his mouth, and that peculiar seat on his horse which was never learnt by quiet rides on the king's highway. As I was staring hard at this anomaly, he coolly took his cigar from his mouth, made a sporting salute of other days, and said:—

"Hulloa, old fellow! who'd have thought of seeing you?"

"What, Johnny Walters! I did hear of a Walters in these parts, but never thought of Walters of Queen's."

"You never thought I should take up with this party, I dare say.—But why not? I was always a gentleman, I make bold to say, and a man of taste, so what other party could I join? But come, turn back along with me. I'll show you my chapel—improvements—quite correct—*instrumenta ecclesiastica* perfect, and all that. Capital organ, too; and my fellows all wear surplices—correct again; and I flatter myself that they do chants and introits first rate. You remember, I always was fond of music."

"And pray how is Mrs. Walters? I had the pleasure of seeing her at Oxford some time since."

"Yes, I know. She is pretty well, thank you. She often talks of you. They know nothing of *that affair* down here. It would spoil all. '*Plucked*,' indeed! that is nothing at all at College; but out of Oxford, people would fancy *goose's* feathers throughout life."

"Scripture and Divinity," I said, "was your difficulty, if I remember rightly?" (Wasn't that mischievous of me?)

"Yes, yes. Divinity for the Examiners—so accurate—texts for everything—all Scripture, and so nice about doctrines. But it is quite different in the Church. The Oxford Tracts are the things to give a man a notion or two. Apostolical succession and "notes of the True Church" are the thing. It puzzles the Dissenters to come up to that—does it not?"

After some casual remarks he continued:—"You'll see my wife presently. Don't say much about it. She's shockingly Low Church, and keeps on being so vexatious. She has never got over that pluck, all because in Divinity—quite absurd! She says, that more of the Bible and less Church History"—(N.B. I doubt if it could have been much less)—"would have set me all the other way. You heard of those people going to Rome? That was a great bore, that was. Temple, my curate, did all that mischief—I was away at Brighton. He confessed some women in the vestry. A Jesuit in disguise—that's what he was. The women would do anything for him—so they will for me. All the women used to be like my wife, that is, Low Church—having nothing else to sympathise with. High Church suits them much better—fine discovery for women—they hem surplices, work monograms, get up chants, and wreathe holly and flowers, Christmas and Easter. I wish you could only see them all hard at work, with wine and cake and good luncheon, and men of our party to help them—by dozens."

"Well, Walters, that's very much what I expected. I hear that this new persuasion, or rather, the Wanley version of it, does not so much as interfere with their balls and parties, and the amusements of gay people."

"Balls and parties! certainly not. I go myself. We have a very hospitable set of people here. I seldom dine at home in the Wanley season—very high society comes to Wanley then. I know them all. Lord Yawn, Marquis of Stretcham, and Sir Wormwood Scrubbs, give capital parties. Lady Emily Scrubbs always comes to Litany Prayers—eight o'clock in the morning.

That meddling fellow, Temple, set that service going. It is a very great bore, for I am obliged to go on with it—as bad as getting up for College Chapel. Lady Yawn and her two nieces, though at a late party the night before, are often up in time; and they are my great supporters."

By this time we had entered his house, and had seen Mrs. Walters. She was, indeed, much altered. She "had married to reform him;" which means, "she had married a man who wanted reforming;" and paid the penalty of every religious woman "unequally yoked to unbelievers."

This silly man's conceit, ignorance, and worldliness, naturally preferred the garb of that party which has more externals to blind the vulgar eye when it is found less easy to imitate their piety and self-denial. For an Evangelical clergyman he could never have passed. Cast of features and a seasoned discourse would have tasked him too hard, to say nothing of a sermon of some fervour and unction on a Sunday. All parties are committed by pretenders, but the notes of the Evangelical are harder to sound, when all is hollowness within. Of the Tractarian party he was so bad an imitation—the wonder of my life has been that he passed at all. Their devotion, their self-denial, and the strict pastoral character—essentials which claim from every Christian man the greatest possible indulgence as regards minor foibles, that may mellow down by time—this was ludicrously though painfully wanting. Still, he counted as extreme High Church, when the poor creature was in reality no Church at all: and, worse than that, by his man-millinery and church-upholstery, and his hollow, soulless practices, he

"Played such fantastic tricks before high heaven,"

as brought, far and wide, contempt and ridicule upon the Church.

He showed me his chapel, consisting of four plastered walls, slate roof, and place for a bell. The interior, without the gallery, would have looked like a Mechanics' Institute. But what was simply plain and ugly, he had made absurd and ridiculous by investing the east end with a grotesque parody of a Popish chapel.

I had some private conversation with his wife. She soon discovered my ideas of the ministry, and did indeed unburthen her mind. It was much against her conscience that she had countenanced him in taking Holy Orders at all. His tastes were wholly unfitted, and what he wanted in spirit he made up by absurd forms. All this, I must clearly see, was hollow and

childish. There was a language in the decorations of the Temple Church—"the teaching of the eye" had there a meaning. It was addressed to minds who could discern things symbolised. It was served by ministers who could breathe a spirit into forms. But this tawdry lath and plaster, and this irreverent nasal twang—a libel on devotional intoning—to her was truly painful. If her husband's distaste for his duties had shown itself in field sports, or in any of the more common forms of idleness, she could have been much better reconciled to her misfortune.

It can hardly be believed, but so it was, that in a town of many hundreds of respectable families this folly was tolerated in a man, whose real character was so easy to read, that the common remark was, "Walters is a very good fellow, only he should have been in the army: he never was for the Church."

Manifestly to condemn High Church for the insanities of one, whom any Christian minister would be deeply grieved to acknowledge, is most unjust: as well reproach the followers of Mr. Simeon with the hypocrisies of those who are bent on fashionable congregations and rich wives.

My opinion is, that moderately High Church and Low Church, two parties with forms and discipline more or less precise—prone as the human mind is to error—providentially conduce to preserve sound doctrine. If we allow for the oscillation of the pendulum, we may soon discern that the balance of truth is ultimately preserved between them. Each party forms a check on the other.

Without High Church, Ultra-Protestantism would ensue, to the sacrifice of all forms and ceremonies, all law and precedent, and even of the sacraments and all objective truth.

Again, without Low Church to raise the No-Popery cry, Roman Catholicism would ensue, from the absence of all subjective truth. High Church alone would set up the sign above the thing signified, and make "the soul cleave unto the dust," instead of being "quickened according to God's word." Low Church alone would land us in Puritanism; it would destroy the candle in its zeal for the light; it would forget the earthen vessel can alone preserve the heavenly treasure in this life; it would etherealise religion till it became "the unsubstantial fabric of a dream," and vanished clean out of mind.

As long as there are two classes of minds; the one leaning on law and precedent, and fond of antiquity, systems, and symbols; the other preferring to be "a law unto themselves," and feeling (or at least not knowing why they should not feel) as

much assisted in their devotions by rectangular lath and plaster, as by the time-hallowed associations of a Gothic minster—so long this diversity of mind will be represented by two such parties as the High Church and the Low.

When I returned home, I made the most of my story and my day's adventures, and related also the antecedents of Johnny Walters, who was plucked at College, and how he said at College that his wife's pupil, "Polly Dodds, in scriptural knowledge could beat his head off." Amidst all the interest created, I could see that a cloud hung over Ellen, and my aunt too—Susan and Ellen's maid had now fallen out, and Susan was suspected of listening at our door, and repeating all we said, of course "with variations," to her mistress.

This made me very uneasy and unsettled. Remember, I had married to get *settled*, and to insure a mind wholly devoted to my duties; but this proved a sad delusion, for I had been unsettled ever since. Ellen always depended much upon my company—she would have gone melancholy-mad if I had not frequently returned to walk with her; and now that she was on unpleasant terms with my aunt, I was more tied to her than ever. Once more Fanny's warning proved true: a man may be instituted to the "charge" or the "cure," not only of a parish but of a lady: and a conflict of duties, as when affection pulls one way and your profession another, is a very trying part of the probation of this mortal state.

We now began to talk about independence. Ellen declared she never could be happy as she was. It were a wonder if she could. Aunt rose before her distempered mind as the cause of every inward twinge and every aching void that flesh is heir to; and of these painful conditions of our mortal state Ellen had about her average share. Our hopes and fears, affections and passions, the fancies of the head and the yearnings of the heart, form a very delicate and a very complex piece of machinery. And since Ellen's moral system went faster or slower, with more or less of friction or inward irritation, as the barometer of her spirits rose or fell, it followed that with her, as with other ladies, there was for every day its disagreeables, and aunt was made accountable for all.

We all have our bugbears, animate or inanimate, in this life. Ellen's bugbear had been her step-mother, and now it was my aunt. Marriage she had looked forward to as heaven upon earth, and as a cure for everything. She did not know that all marriages add poignancy to troubles, but good marriages only

increase our pleasures. There never was an affectionate survivor who did not every month feel, "how much more distressing would this disappointment be if my loved one were alive to hear me tell it." Still, ours was a good marriage—I was her chief happiness, and she was mine. Marriage had given our hearts a few more strings and a more natural tone, and, so far, better harmony; but, there ever will be something discordant in the human heart—that discord or discontent within the breast which is inseparable from our fallen, shattered, and degenerate nature—and this no human affection can ever be so charming as to subdue.

However, this being my dear wife's state of mind, I was prepared to find her every day devising some change that should secure her an undivided empire over that troubled kingdom, my poor heart, and invest her with the full rights and dignity of a married woman. Much as I regret it, I cannot blame her. All wives feel the same, that while any female relative is in the way the dominion never can be theirs. Gentlemen often feel this too. Matt. Currant told his wife, in my presence, that her mother spoilt all his sovereignty for the first six months, and after that, it took two years to rub the old lady out of the young one!

While such were our hopes and wishes, something occurred, as it were, to let the house over the discontented tenant's head—something which imperatively told us that circumstances had decided for us, and that, as far as leaving Greenside would further our views, that change was now beyond all question. For, as I was returning one day from Hinton, our market-town, I heard our bell tolling, and saw heads out of cottage windows, and every symptom of some stirring news: when Sally Browning stopped my horse and said, "What! han't you a heard, sir? 'Tis our Rector 's dead! News come by Thomas Gidden's coach." Yes, the sad tidings had arrived that my good old Rector had died suddenly of hæmorrhage in the lungs: so it came to pass, that while we were discussing the wisdom of a change, circumstances decided for us. I confess the news so took us by surprise, that we secretly reflected it was a pity we did not know when we were well off.

What now was our position? All we could muster was 40*l.* a-year, and we had no ready money to move with; so that, far from my aunt being guilty of cramping our independence, we now saw that, but for her assistance, we could not move hand or foot!

We never had such a lesson in our lives. The good lady's fidgeting now shrank into nothing, and Susan's impudence was

a trifle, before the difficulties which now opened to our view. Our dream of independence, with a single rub of the eyes, and thinking "Where am I?" seemed a shadow indeed. Ellen's "dignity as a married woman," began also to feel that this world's "rubs" are comparative, and there are hard rubs everywhere.

Poor dear creature! born as we are into a school of misery, we all find the grammar the hardest part. Independence, indeed! Well, if we could play a solo, or dance through life as one *pas seul*, we might be independent; but, while every yearning implies an object, and every friend, relative or servant, is but mortal like ourselves — while independence of scrubbing implies dependence on the gin of a Hayward, or the impudence of a Susan, we may vary our chains, but not escape them, and often find the new more galling than the old.

But what was to be done?—Ellen and I were a long time closeted and deep in thought before we went, or had the courage to go, like naughty, "found-out" children, into the presence of my aunt. Her feelings we measured by our own guilty deserts, and were fully prepared for a look at least that should tell us,—"Well, you are likely to have your wish this time, and how do you like the prospect? The present home has slipped from under you—your feelings are wrapped up in each other. One whom I have tended through life as my own child, has grown cold and restrained in my presence. Little did I think, as my boy gave his heart to another, it must chill his affections, that once were so confiding, so grateful, to me."

This was the reception we anticipated as we both went together into the room. What to say, and how to begin, we did not know; but the trying moment must come, and Ellen shook like a leaf as she tried to compose herself for the scene. But—as too often happens—we had left the life-long habits and distinctive character of the supposed adversary wholly out of the calculation, and had reasoned just as if we had expected the wolf's nature in a lamb.

No sooner had we opened the door than, with tears of tenderness, she sprang forward to meet us.

"My dear children," she said, with eyes liquid with pity, "you are not used to life's trials as I am. This world has troubles, and these are of them. Oh! don't mistake me: I weep not for this trial only, but a long course is before you. I have felt them all: and I have long seen how little you knew of the real troubles of life, you thought so much of imaginary ills.

Thorns and thistles strew your path. My heart melts within me when I think of the first of a long series which broke upon me. And may the Almighty help you: the book of Scripture and the book of life say both the same thing — trouble, trouble, nothing but trouble. The sun bursts out brightly between whiles, but cloud follows cloud: we can only hope for a lull — no long-continued calm. But — I know it is in vain to tell you. I look into your future when I am dead and gone, and when there are none to stand by you. You know, my dear girl, and must make allowance — you know how my yearnings have always been towards him I called my own dear boy. I am a fond, foolish old woman, I know. But I see the truth, I have felt it before. My brother and I were like two doves till that brother married, and then he was lost to me. I must be content with the life of the poor old maid, and promote that happiness of affection which, in age as in youth, is denied to myself."

Butler says, "Had virtue power as it has authority, it would rule the world." This noble woman's goodness shook the very ground from under us, and made us powerless beneath her sway. We were both too deeply moved and overwhelmed to utter much in words, however expressive were our looks. It was eventually agreed that we had some months to consider, and therefore we would deem all for the best and not mention the subject for the present. — "You will know, when as old as I am, my dears, how often while 'man proposes God disposes,' and our anxious deliberations end in a decision not our own." How often have we quoted these words!

The next post brought a letter from a solicitor. He had altered Mr. Griffin's will on his death-bed, and had to announce, not a legacy, but a cheque of fifty guineas he held for me, to be given me on the day of the funeral, at which I was expected to officiate. The good old man meant this cheque as a compensation for the expense consequent on the brief tenure of my curacy.

I was obliged to start after the services on a Sunday. It was a cold November evening, and my way lay over some of the bleakest hills in the county. After a long Sunday's duties, Ellen and my aunt knew I was fit for nothing but to lie on the sofa, or, perhaps, quietly sketch my next Sunday's sermon; too tired to read. Such a midnight journey seemed too severe to purchase even by the fifty guineas. So, I was coddled and wrapped up with warm neckerchiefs to the last moment, and then committed to the care of Mr. Dean's servant to drive.

However, I travelled safely twenty miles in the farmer's gig to the railway station, and reached the house of mourning in the Regent's Park at three o'clock in the morning, where a bed was prepared for me.

Every man, and certainly every woman, is an alchemist. In one sense, we can turn everything to gold, or "therefrom suck no small advantage," at least in the way of excitement, vanity, and self-importance, if not in money: for, I have always observed that, from the moment the master of the house is dead, ay, or even dying, the house turns into Liberty Hall, and every one seems to think that, somehow or other, it must be made to turn to his or her private benefit. From the coal-cellar to the garrets, waste and extravagance run riot. The only work worth anything done in the house, out of the sick-room, is answering the door.

I was admitted by a kind of Mrs. Proserpine, with a nightcap tied on by a ribbon. "Very cold, sir, you must be. I expected you ever so long—you won't mind our kitchen—obliged to keep a good fire—very acceptable such a night as this—cos of the soldering. I knows pretty well what belongs to these jobs—seen so many of them. Master is to be buried in lead—and regular undertakers' jobbery that is. Please sit down, sir—(handling a gridiron)—I ordered in a steak for your supper."

Indeed, true to the occasion, she had calculated my appetite at about 4lbs. of choice beef; though a fine cold sirloin was in view. While preparing me some tea, she went on: "Yes, them undertakers do make jobs—buried in lead, indeed!—so stiff and cold-like; I cannot bear the notion. And that churchyard is such a damp, unhealthy sort of place—they shouldn't bury me there—let alone the body-snatchers."

"So, you have found the undertakers quite alive to their own interest?"

"Bless me, sir! you should hear my 'sperience to know 'em. You see a body can die but once, sir, and it takes twice to be up to them. No feeling in them, not a bit of it—for all they moves about so sympathetic. You've heard o' ravens about a house afore death—well, they's like the undertakers—a asking for the funeral afore ever the gentleman's dead. Why, there was Miss Maria, sister to Mr. West—I was months with him—had a young woman call about the mourning when she hadn't quite given up hoping he might live. And the letters that were sent—cemetery letters, drawings of tombstones, patent crape, besides undertakers writing for orders, and making interest through the

tradespeople—and the poor gentleman alive all the time—'twas shameful! But the doctors mostly likes to put in the first word; for undertakers' wives has babies and fevers, and all them complaints, like other folk: so it's wheels within wheels. But I served Williams, that made such a fortune burying all Gotham.—He used to have champagne dinners for the Gotham doctors—he did."

It may astonish some to hear me say every word of this was strictly true. One of my relations, while driving a hard bargain with her landlord, at eighty-three, was answered, "Well, ma'am, but if I do make the repairs, you must leave orders that I am to bury you!" I have also seen vaults made on speculation, and a lady of the same age led round that way,—"perhaps she might fancy one of them."

By this time I was ready for bed, and left my interesting companion to keep up the fire for closing the leaden coffin.

Next morning, before breakfast, the first person I met at this house of mourning was Mrs. White, his housekeeper, and almost his nurse—an old servant to whom he had left an annuity.

"Oh, Mr. Austin!" she exclaimed, "such a life they lead me all along of this annuity. There they were a eagling of my dear old master almost as soon as he was dead. Why, charity ain't a sin, and for all that they say nothing but is bad of him. The cousin and the nephew pounced upon the will, and read a whole list of hospitals and societies, and a few hundreds only for themselves. Master often said they had more than they made good use of as it was.—But hush! here they are, coming down-stairs."

Enter nephew and his wife, persons of about fifty years of age. "It will not be a very large funeral, Mr. Austin. How can it, after such a will as his? Undertaker's men say there is not a bite or a drop for any one. We think the charities ought to bury him. A sad thing, indeed, is want of family affection! Lunatics, incurables, consumptives, cancerous, and all sorts,—all preferred to his own pure flesh and blood!"

Truth is stranger than fiction. "Sad thing is want of family affection," indeed! Why, these very people who said so would "have coined his heart and dropped his blood for drachmas," could they have done so, and were ready to scratch "Skin-flint" on the escutcheon of one who had lived a life of doing good.

One of the most instructive scenes in life is a rich man's funeral. Clergymen necessarily see and hear a great deal on these occasions. For my own part, I never found much temptation to introduce Confession into the Church; least of all when the

heart is full, and working with the yeast of envy, covetousness, and all unkindness. At these times I have heard far more confessions than, for the honour of human nature, I ever thought to hear.

My kind friend was seventy-six when he died. He knew the "world," to wit, "the flesh and the devil," as well as most men. To know the world you should know yourself. Even the Christian Mr. Griffin had only to look within. He had only to imagine his own heart free from the constraining grace of God—a ship without a rudder, anchor, or ballast, at the mercy of every gale, and bursting, like the cave of Æolus, with passions hardly chained within; and he would find, even in his own breast, a type and model of the world without.

See the "happy" family in Trafalgar Square. Those cats, and owls, and hawks, represent genteel life. They have each their proper nature, and can only keep their claws to themselves, because living in easy circumstances. Mrs. Dowager Cat has not an ugly kitten on her hands at the end of a season; they have no nests to feather, and they are all well fed. And no one knew better than Mr. Griffin that this often makes the difference between the quarrelsome couples before the justice, and the well-regulated family at the Hall.

"I'll be my own executor, as far as possible," said the good old man. "After my death worms may destroy my mortal body, but the lawyers shall not feed long on my estate. There will be a fine noise in the house when my will is opened, but I shall not hear it. My will must be one to satisfy the chancery of Heaven. No one will know, so no one can be jealous of gifts that I arrange in my life-time. You know my favourite charities. They are all remembered. We can't take our money with us. I think it far better to divide as much as I can across my table, and leave very little to be shared over my coffin."

These, I knew, were his sentiments: yet, so deeply was I impressed by his benevolence—for he had been the founder of an hospital—a man of no mere fireside charity, who had served every good cause, not only in purse, but person, and "went about doing good"—that I expected nothing but praises and blessings would follow him to the tomb.

"Did you ever," said the Rev. John Brown of Aberdeen, in one of his quaint but pointed sermons—"did you ever attend a rich man's funeral? You would think the man had neither a body nor a soul—that he was made of gold, of bankers' balances, and parchment."

I have attended many. The conversation is much the same; you hear little of what the man lived worth, but very much of what he died worth. We are forcibly reminded of what Robert South preached—"Early in life I heard it said that an old man had no friend but his money. I have myself lived long enough to feel its truth."

The sublime and the ridiculous, the tricky means of life, and the awful end of it, are nowhere brought into stronger contrast than with the class who live by what are called, in the callous vulgar tongue, "black jobs." After a little experience, I felt more disgust than awe from the funeral preparation and etiquette, wherein the undertaker acts as a kind of Master of the Ceremonies, ticketing our hats, and prescribing the order of precedence; and really, when he does say who is chief mourner, I often feel I never should have guessed it from the gentleman's looks. But to persons unused to these mock solemnities, they are a cruel addition to the necessary terrors of the day. I have seen a fine fellow bear up manfully all that trying morning, in which he was to see the last of one, "the desire of his eyes," and the cherished object of his heart; but, when the draper came in to pin the trumpery scarf upon his shoulder, I have seen him tremble and give way, just as I should expect while pinioning the condemned.

It may seem strange if I confess that I read the service over my worthy Rector without much emotion. The pall, the coffin, the preparation at the grave, and, above all, the lowering out of sight, when we turn our faces, and leave the last trace of any loved one behind—these are the trying moments to most persons, and once were to me.—You hear one is dead; and, while he is still in the same silent chamber, you scarcely can realise your loss: but, when the turf has closed over him, or when the last wheel has moved from the door, and left you gazing on vacancy through the half-closed shutter, then it is that you first feel your heart-wrenching sorrow. All this funeral routine, and the mere accidents of death, are now so familiar to me, that they fail to intensify the pang of the first sad tidings.

Our funeral party consisted of some old acquaintances resolved to follow him to the grave, and some life-long dependants who sincerely wept for their best of friends.

Providentially, at loss of relatives, we seldom have much leisure to brood over our own wounded spirit. All great changes are attended with doubts, and suspense, and anxieties peculiarly their own. We cannot dwell on things very different at the same time.

We cannot be swayed at once with feelings of the softer and the sterner kind. Death appeals to the imagination and the poetry of our nature, but the cares of life to cold calculation and to facts.—We must eat and drink as well as grieve: and the daily ebb and flow of hunger and of sleep all help to divert the mind, as also to pour in a flood of buoyant spirits to cheer the sinking heart. All this I have experienced so often, that I can always speak comfort to the friends of those who, it is feared, will grieve overmuch. Dr. Johnson was true to life when he described the Princess in *Rasselas*, striving, but in vain, to preserve the freshness of her sorrow. Still, though time will wear out the deepest scars, the physical change that comes over us is among the mysteries of our nature. Long after the mind is composed and reconciled, the body feels the blow. The frame is all unnerved, and the strong man's knees give under him for many days.

We returned to the usual luncheon; and then each family man crammed his silk or crape into his pocket and went off home.

This day was observed at Greenside by the tolling of the bell, which carried home to many a sorrowing cottager the thought that one solemn chapter in the Book of Life was closed for ever, and that the pastor and the friend of many a year was numbered with the dead.

Dead! ay, but not gone.—"Though dead, he speaketh." It is not only in our Saviour, but in every Christian man, that "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us," and that "we beheld Him, full of grace and truth." The true Christian bodies forth God's law—the living illustration of His word. He is the "epistle read of all men." They who could not spell their Bible, could all read the Gospel in that Minister of Christ. That perfect character which the wisdom of Greece and Rome could not realise—that balance and combination of excellencies so hard for any pen to set forth—was all made plain to the simple folk of Greenside.

I had just time to buy some little presents and catch the train to take me home, agreeably surprising the ladies about nine o'clock in the evening. They had not been quite alone. The news of the Rector's death brought many visitors to make inquiries about the probable destiny of the parish.

—"Really it is very hard upon you, Mrs. Austin: we quite pity you—it must, indeed, be so inconvenient. You'll have to leave, of course?—Your aunt, too, at her time of life: dear me, how troublesome!—How sorry you must be, after her beginning quite a new life with the young and happy couple!"—

Such was the kind of civilities which Ellen was doomed to hear.—All this secret rejoicing in a neighbour's troubles we must set down, I suppose, to a pleasing sense of comparative security.

These busybodies, the gnats and wasps of society, seemed once more ordained to thrust us onwards and deny us rest. Such persons are as police in plain clothes, spies or censors in ordinary, and no doubt they are quite a providential arrangement. "Live by labour" is the law. That a young couple should marry, increase, and multiply on the resources of one kind old woman, would, if every one did the same, soon waste the world's capital and bring civilisation to an end. And nothing prevents this evil half as much as the general tendency to despise persons who are too poor for their station or who live depending on means not their own.

The same want of sympathy was easy to read in every letter we received from the family circle. For, here I must explain that this good aunt was regarded as a kind of golden goose in our family, and they had no idea of letting us have all the eggs for ourselves. So now we soon observed—especially in Uncle Ben's family, for cousin Bens were much pinched and missed aunt sadly —some little chuckling at the thought that our monopoly was drawing to an end.

Every week something more conspired to part us. And next, Susan found out she could not bear Greenside. She missed, I suppose, all the gossip of Blindham with the baker's man at the rails, and the policeman sneaking down the area. Besides, she felt kept in order, and we seemed to "molest her ancient solitary reign." Susan, therefore, began to persuade her mistress that the place did not agree with her. How should it? We lived close to a churchyard, and she was sure she smelt the nasty bodies; and as to the damp—why the house, she had heard, was built upon a watercress bed!

All this time the mistress's own inclinations pointed the same way. She had left everything that she liked at Blindham, she had encountered everything she did not like at Greenside: the scolding wives and drunken husbands were not the better for her reading or her tracts, and the ragged children were not the more tidy for her pennies or her pinnies. She had been used to see no object more repulsive, in the way of charity, than a pleasant-looking gentleman to receive one pound one, with a little talk into the bargain, in her own drawing-room; whereas, in the lanes of Greenside she was like a mudlark, and the colds that she caught in the cottages, and certain other things which Susan had to catch when she came home—were dreadful.

And it is quite natural that she should also miss her little Blindham dissipations—consisting of putting on her best clothes, and seeing in the glass how she was going to look; then wheel-chair, tea and talk, expounding, prayers; then cake and wine, then wheel-chair again, and seeing once more in the glass how she had looked, and so happy and hallucinated for a week. Besides—must I confess it?—all her love for her nephew could not reconcile her to the loss of her dear Blindham minister. There was, she allowed, a great satisfaction in assisting at my Sunday-school, and I believe she was yet more delighted while waiting on my Sunday pensioners and fishing for dumplings and bits of meat in the large red pan of soup. But as to my sermons, she said they were all very well for poor souls destitute of all Christian experience, but —but—for herself——

I knew what she meant. She found them flat and insipid: she had been used to Sunday excitement; she had been used to be wound up like a seven-day clock, and she missed this weekly stimulus. So, she had two strong ties to Blindham. No one could manage her complaints like her own doctor; no one could give her comfort like her own minister.

It was now February—the sixth month of the "family compact;" and aunt, being called away to Blindham for a week, was assured by Dr. Snivel that all her complaints were worse; and, in short, that he was the only man who could keep her alive. And I might add, it took a few such as aunt to keep him alive.

The result was—the offer of a small allowance to enable us to live alone.

This offer was received by Ellen and me with great joy. We put it down upon paper; we added so much for curacy; so much more for Ellen's expectations, and so much more for mine; and at once an income stared us in the face so ample, that we sat up late talking of it, and went to bed just as happy as if hoping and having were one and the same thing.

Next morning we were in high spirits. Ellen said, "Now we are, indeed, independent." And so we were, after a fashion: we were independent of one set of ties, and we had not as yet felt the other.

One of my friends went to New Zealand, because he liked to be independent. He should have no tolls or turnpikes; no fusty office and dread of bankruptcy; no domineering master or vexatious clients, patients, or customers. This was quite true so far. But one day a master, named "Starvation," met him there, and said, "Sick or well, you must work." Another day a master,

named "Wintry Cold," sternly ordered that, under pain of death, he should swim his horse across a flooded river to his hut on the other side. Then Master "Brother Settler" very often dictated, "If you don't put up with my temper and help me, next time your horse is stogged he shall rot."

True as is this view of independence, it was clear gain that we had no aunt now to tell us of it: so we enjoyed this lull and lucid interval in blissful ignorance.

Prudence, my good old readers, is all very well; but please to remember, that Providence does not throw a veil over the future for you so mercilessly to take it off. See that distant landscape, when reft of its charms on a dull and chilly day, all nature seeming nipped and lifeless. Now look again, and see the warm and mellow tints, where the sun has poured a vital flood of golden light.—Such is life: so genial, so joyous, in the sunshine of youth; so cold a reality to wintry age.

Still time passed on, and some preferment must be found in three months more. These were the early days of the new parishes called the Peel Districts, formed chiefly in manufacturing towns. Ellen shuddered at the thought of those stacks of dark chimneys and high brick shafts gurgling forth volumes of dense smoke. She had once travelled through the manufacturing districts, whose rivers looked strong of the blue-bag, and whose population was hideous with bare purple arms and smutty faces; and she naturally dreaded the thoughts of living there.—Talk of the pleasures of matrimony! It has often gone to my very heart to propose to Ellen what would never have troubled me as a single man. However, most happily I heard of a Peel District in the pretty town of Lachford, a place which promised economical housekeeping, and a quiet, picturesque home. I was not long in applying in person to the Bishop of Z.

The Bishop of Z. was a character. He had been cast in a very different mould from other men. His whole time and energies, and no small part of only a small fortune, were devoted to his diocese, and the general interests of the Church. He was a man of great moral courage, and of strong antagonistic nature; and, like other men used to troublous times, he would perhaps rather raise a storm than sail in smooth water. If you wish to be popular in this world, you should always go with the stream. People will forgive you for doing no good at all, provided you never make bad for them. But the Bishop of Z. was so unwise as to go dead against the stream, which in his diocese was rather a foul stream, too. If applied to for advice, he would actually

commit himself to straightforward answers; and as to the usual evasive replies, I do believe the Bishop of Z. never used up half of them to the day of his death.

Then, he was so venturesome. He would fly at great game. He would not only, like his brethren, protect a poor curate whom he thought right, but he would let the wind out of any puffed-up nobleman whom he thought wrong. Unhappily, he wrote with a very hard steel pen, and vinegar in his ink. The smarting words of a genuine Z. letter have been known to stick and sting and to rankle in the wound they made for many a long day.

Few persons reflect that a Christian is a man leavened by the Gospel, but only a man still. And this man may have one talent, five or ten, in the way of natural impatience, excitement of the brain, or inward irritation.

The Bishop of Z. was evidently born with so many of these disturbing causes in his moral economy as to make a most unepiscopal constitution. Still, such as God made him, such he was: and perhaps the true leaven had not done little, because there was from the first no little for that leaven to correct. The Irish have a saying, that you must make allowance for a child who was "weaned upon pickles," and I think so, too.

Such, then, was the Bishop I had to approach. I knew the shortest and the plainest story would be most likely to prevail. To his lordship I was an utter stranger. He said, after much conversation, he would make inquiries concerning me, and I might call again. After a few days I paid a second visit; when he said my address, and health, and strength, and energy, seemed useful additions to the qualifications of which he had heard, and by using his name in a letter to Sir R. Peel, the church, when built, would be mine. Meanwhile, he could offer me a temporary curacy in Lachford, so that I might become acquainted with my future parishioners.

—"Then the bishops are vilified, you would tell us? We thought they never gave preferment to strangers—but all to their own private friends, and all by interest."—

That the patronage of our bishops is honourably distributed, I sincerely believe, not only from long observation, but from the reason of the case. Nothing but a hearty interest in his diocese can reconcile a bishop to the great labour it involves. That interest is his only stimulus and chief reward. Is it likely, then, that he would endure to plant thorns in his vineyard, by preferring the unworthy to oblige his friends? As well say that

the captain of a ship would hamper himself with a lubberly lieutenant or an ignorant chief mate. Bishops make a bad choice sometimes, but not often,—and designedly, never. It is no answer to say that they appoint their friends: for, who is there who has not more confidence in men known to him personally, than in interested recommendations or high-flown testimonials?

This I say as regards bishops at the present day, whatever may have been the errors of a past generation.

When I returned home, Ellen and I were as blithe and happy as birds on a May morning. All looked bright. There is such a charm in the new and the unknown. Now, I was to be incumbent of St. John's, Lachford. A new church was building for me, and a new parish formed—one, of course, to be moulded exactly according to my will.

While we were rejoicing and daily planning a remove, Ellen became every morning a little indisposed, and I insisted on her having medical advice. Mr. Elways paid her a visit, and soon came down-stairs laughing, and said to me, "You are going to some new parish, are you not?" I replied, "Yes." "Well, then," he said, "if I were you, I would be particular about the county; for, it may be a son, and a close county scholarship or fellowship, twenty years hence, may be had for asking for."—No time was to be lost. Evidently there was now a good family man's reason for being settled soon, and we took measures accordingly.

CHAPTER X.

WE MOVE TO LACHFORD — THE WIDE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN AN ELEGANT HOME AND CHEAP LODGINGS — MY NEW PARISH DESCRIBED.

When I left Greenside, my parishioners were sorry to lose me, and our twelve Sunday pensioners were no less grieved at losing Ellen; and many of them gave us some touching evidence of kind feeling. I had not served long enough for any parting gift; and simple Greenside folk had never heard of presentation plate: indeed, the thing is grown quite vulgar. A clergyman once told me he was resolved to reply, if ever he were asked (which he never was), *Nolo* teapot-*ari*. However, horses and gigs were offered for my use, and Farmer Dean's waggon and team kindly conveyed my goods and chattels twenty miles to the railway station; and on my last Sunday the church was crowded, as if for a farewell sermon: but I preferred private interviews for evincing private feelings. All the farewell sermons I have ever known, have been a mere sickly trifling with holy things.

I shall never forget the chilly evening in April that we entered Lachford, as we did, outside the coach: for, Ellen said she would begin as we must go on, and economy must now be considered. We stopped at the Mitre Inn. Ellen had said — that, like a brave soldier's wife, she was ready to rough it; and, indeed, that she liked the freedom and the adventure of the thing. Still, freedom from fire, till a dirty maid lighted it, with a smoky room and comfortless tea that night, and heavy bill next morning, was not the kind of adventure which fancy pictured at a time when no tenderness and comfort could be too great to do justice to my feelings.

I pity from my heart the widow or the orphan striving at economy at an inn. A certain sum they will have out of you: whether wine or wax-lights is the fiction, it little matters. A bill-ious sensation spoils all your enjoyment. Your room sounds as "Apartments" at so much. You read by "wax-lights," so much; you poke "firing" at so much; every meal loses its

refreshing character in a two-shilling or three-and-sixpenny association. Even the waiter's civility seems expensive; and when you think you have ingeniously economised dinner and supper in a "meat tea," he calls over the banisters, "Send up a cheap and stingy meal for Number Eleven."

This was the unsatisfactory state of feeling in which we passed two days, when I found furnished lodgings over a shoemaker's shop; for, the choice is small in a country-town. There was a horsehair sofa as hard as brick—with the usual indication of where previous lodgers used to sit down—rickety furniture and grotesque ornaments, and such a servant and arrangements as a shoemaker's ideas may be supposed to dictate.

Poor Ellen! How different is this, how very different from your former homes! How little do we know of the blessings of refinement, till thrown daily among people whose every habit shocks our delicacy, and offends our taste! "Love in a Cottage" sounds poetic; but "Love in Lodgings" sounds poor; and "Love up one pair of stairs" is distressing. It is easy to talk of contentment with small means—of "a genteel little income," and so forth; but, when a loud, vulgar laugh sounds through your floor, bad tobacco pours up your staircase, and your delicate wife is almost run down by a big, coarse fellow, with "Ask your pardon, ma'am," in the narrow passage, and is always nervous at moving out of her own room—yes, and when even cleanliness is difficult, and ventilation impossible, in a house which always smells strong of the lower orders: why, then, this is not exactly that form of poverty you bargained for.

Never mind, my dears; it can't be helped. Persons who do foolish things in this world cannot choose the shape of their own rod, and may be sure it will fall on the most tender and sensitive part.

Dr. Vine and his wife paid us a visit, and talked in a friendly, pleasing way, offering any kind of assistance in their power. Mrs. Vine, much younger than her husband, had just recovered from twins, so looked sympathetically at Ellen. The freemasonry in such interesting situations is wonderful among ladies, and, indeed, among mothers generally. My favourite mare will never pass a colt in the road but she pricks up her ears, and seems as if she would like to nurse it. Some doctors and doctors' wives called, too, and were very attentive; but I could see that they had an eye to business, though we were especially taken with Dr. and Mrs. Sackville. Then some of the small fry came, with the usual mixture of envy and vulgarity; for, they looked round at the room,

informed us of some well-known disagreeables in Chapley's lodgings, and said, "Of course, this was only temporary," while we were arranging our proper establishment.

Every one who has been at the sea-side even knows the waste and the pillage of housekeeping in lodgings—how hard to control expense! How much you spend, and how little you get for it!—We soon began to hope we might, eventually, find some house to ourselves; for, by this time, we had learnt the blessing of a proper home.

Dean Swift was certainly not of the number of sentimental writers, but he undoubtedly spoke truthfully when he said, that if a young couple married into poverty, their affection only served to torture each other. How true have these words sounded to me in the course of my many difficulties! A marriage of affection has many pure joys, but it winds up the heartstrings for the intensity of grief. If the old maid or the lonely bachelor think they have never known pleasure, a fond husband could tell them they have never known pain. My heart has been many a time wrung with anguish, simply because this or that trouble must be borne by my Ellen; and she has often been able to say, "All this were as nothing, but I know the sorrow it will give to him." But, to the honour of womankind, I must confess, that when a man does make a clean breast of a trouble, he often finds his wife has the more fortitude of the two.

However, I had every reason to be thankful for the choice I had made. My dear wife made light of every inconvenience as far as words went, but I could not help seeing the effort that it cost her. Every market-day I bought her a twopenny nosegay, though I could not offer it without thinking how poorly it contrasted with the flower-gardens and conservatories of other days. Still, her amiability and patience reminded me very often of my sister Fanny's advice, and of the "regular settlers," as she said, whom by this time I should have found in the Anna Croftons and the ball-room misses who were my admiration at home. The reader will soon see, that any such a wife *à-la-mode* would have increased my burthen till it crushed me to the ground.

It was now time to become acquainted with my future parishioners. The new church was not yet finished, and my duties were, for the present, confined to visiting in my new district. So, for a certain number of hours daily, my reader will be able to picture "Ellen at home," and not seldom counting the minutes to the return of the only companion and all the society congenial to her feelings, that she, for the most part, saw for many days to-

gether. One of those new districts rarely offers a sphere for a lady. Ellen made an attempt to visit the poor, and had always some sick women and children in whom to take interest; still, if there is not only no money to spare, but if there is not even the broth and broken victuals which a regular establishment affords, to offer as an earnest of kindly feeling—I do, indeed, pity any good lady who attempts district-visiting in a poor district.

My duty was plain. It was to work the problem of Dr. Chalmers,—"Given a district church, it is required to fill it with intelligent worshippers, exclusively belonging to that district." It is comparatively easy, by eccentric or interesting preaching, to draw a congregation from the parishes around. And it is a pity that certain clergymen do not reflect how uselessly—aye, how mischievously, they are employed, when, instead of adding to the number of the Christian flock, they are simply emptying their neighbour's fold into their own.

My district might indeed be a lesson to bishops and ecclesiastical authorities, to beware of local and selfish interests in forming a new parish. Almost all the poor of Lachford were assigned to me. My boundary reminded me of the most intricate of the Chinese puzzles, for the lines were drawn zig-zag, so as to take in the houses of the poor and to leave out the houses of the rich.

Here was, indeed, a sphere for a missionary. I am far from speaking against Foreign Missions, when wisely conducted. I do not believe that they exhaust the stream of charity which would otherwise flow at home. For, all their funds put together, bear no appreciable proportion to the wealth of the country. Charity is a virtue that requires exercise; and, in one sense, it is quite contrary to fact to say that "Charity begins at home;" for very often it begins abroad and ends at home. It requires at first the excitement of novelty, and touching, moving incidents. Such helps are indispensable for a large part of the world. I mean, those whose walk is confined to the Parks and the Belgravia of life, and whose charity never comes face to face with the father, faint with toil and hunger, yet earning still his children's bread;—persons who never dream of the fever-stricken mother—such things do happen—stitching for some elegant lady, little conscious of her doom, a veritable Nessussian mantle, with her typhus-poisoned fingers!

Still such places as "Spinney" (so my district was called), would, indeed, employ a mission much nearer home. I made "a

house-to-house visitation," with a book of vertical columns, headed with Name—Street—Number of Family—Ages (about)—Occupation—If Baptized—General Remarks. I need not say that they, one and all, were glad to see me—some for the honour of the visit, some for the novelty, and a few from early recollections of a village pastor. Many I found in such ragged wretchedness I could hardly hope to bring them to a church. Many were deadened in feeling by foul air acting on the brain like a narcotic, as also by ardent spirits which they craved to counteract it. And some were so hardly tasked for the wants of the body, that the Sabbath was pretty sure to find them late in bed in the morning, or standing listless at their doorway, or, perhaps, sauntering in the green fields all the afternoon.

Some good Christian people think that the Gospel is to do everything. But, sanitary reformers and early-closing advocates are its best allies, and are beginning at the right end. Six days' aërial poison to the brain, or six days' fretting of the nerves or exhaustion of the system, will cause the Sabbath-bell to sound in vain.

However, I found about twelve poor bedridden persons for my visiting list. Some had been early trained, and knew the way of salvation; and the rest seemed comforted by my visits, though very ignorant. Maria Sanders, I particularly remember, had formed a singularly low estimate of heavenly things. She was crippled and wasted away; and the mortal tenement seemed scarcely to hold together. So, one day, I said, "Never mind, Maria, all will be changed: there will be no pains or sorrows, and we shall have a new body, even a heavenly body."

"Ah! sir," she said, "I am so glad to hear you say so. I do want a new body very bad; yes, and I want a new *inside*, too."

Indeed, the sublunary notions of the poor are often very striking. A friend related to me, that once when he had rather bewildered than satisfied an old sailor with the texts he quoted, in answer to his inquiry as to what Heaven would be like, and what kind of happiness to hope for, the poor man exclaimed, —"Yes, sir, all very good, as your honour says—no doubt of it: but, says I, Old England for me."

At the end of a long day's work, Ellen and I went to dine at our Rector's, and met a few of the Church-building Committee. Some months, it seems, would pass before the church could be fit for consecration. We heard the news of the place; and, to say

the truth, we enjoyed the dinner: for, chops and steaks badly cooked, and close economy, had begun to pall upon the appetite.

The way the church was built was a curious history. Charity bazaars and collecting-cards—every one "to be filled up with twelve shilling subscribers," and "more, if you please"—had done their work: and a roomful of young ladies had directed envelopes, with "urgent appeals," by the hundreds.

The history of the rise and progress of this church shall be told in another chapter.

CHAPTER XI.

HISTORY OF A NEW PARISH, AND THE WAYS AND MEANS BY WHICH A CHURCH, AFTER TWENTY YEARS' TALKING, WAS BUILT AT LAST.

A LAND rich in hospitals shows there is charity somewhere, and a land rich in churches shows that there is piety somewhere; but it by no means follows, that every good institution was the immediate work of a good motive or a good man.

St. John's Church, in the new district of Lachford, is quite a case in point. "Never," said Mr. Burcham, "did I see so much of the corrupt motives of human nature as in getting up that church. Lachford was a close borough—some drunken freemen, and some sharp attorneys, who led them like brutes by the chain of their vices, could return two members to Parliament. Beer decided the freemen; the freemen decided the election.

Lachford was also close in another respect: old Dr. Vine had had it all to himself for many years—a very good man out of the pulpit, a very useless man in. He preached Tillotsonian sermons through an eyeglass, and through his nose: still there was no alternative; for, those who drank "Church and State" felt it more than their politics were worth to go anywhere else, however desirous they might be. Strange, horrible things, were done in those days. "In turning out an old chest in the Town Hall," said the clerk, "what do you think it was brimful of? Why, certificates of A B or C D having received the Sacrament so as to be eligible for office under the old Test Act!"—The Dean Rural visiting the same church was answered by the Rector himself, when complaining of the dust and cobwebs, "Why, the fact is, our sexton is such a drunken sot we can do no better!"

Then, Lachford Church was very heavy for the voice; and as the Doctor had little energy, and read in a most drowsy and monotonous manner, the service was as sleepy a performance as can well be imagined. One old woman, whom the Doctor was visiting in a kind and consoling way—for, with all the errors of my bre-

thren, by the bedside even of the dying pauper I am proud to declare that even the worst of us is seen to some advantage—said, "Sir, I haven't had half a night's sleep this week, but please God I hear one of your sermons next Sunday, then I knows I shall have a good nap." This story circulated widely in a sense less complimentary than the poor woman intended.

To all this stagnation, if we add the fact that there were some 5000 souls under this one pastor, and only the few who were literary ever heard him preach in his own tongue, we shall not be surprised to find that while the Church party in Lachford had gone on talking about building one new church, the Dissenters had actually built five new chapels.

I said there was piety "somewhere," or we never should have had our new church after all. So, every year the piety of the Bishop dictated a hint at the spiritual destitution of Lachford. Then the piety of the Archdeacon suggested another hint. These dignitaries used to be received at the Rectory, as also was "the deputation" from the societies, all very hospitably; so, sometimes they, and sometimes any other clergyman, who had happened to put a note of admiration in his *Clergy List* opposite the name of the one Lachford and the one Church!—or, opposite the one Dr. Vine and 5000 souls! also inquired if no new church were in contemplation.

The piety of each of these parties, I say, came in aid. In course of time, newspaper paragraphs more and more frequently announced church building in other places—ay, and in other parts of the same diocese: so, all conspired to say that things could not remain as they were—not for decency's sake, not for proper public spirit. There were not a few good Christian people whose piety also helped the cause; but the greater help was when the public spirit came into play, with bustling self-importance and neck-and-neck rivalry—no weak powers in a country town.

It so happened, fortunately, that Mr. Burcham the schoolmaster, and his friend Mr. Challen, the timber-merchant, were churchwardens at the same time. Mr. Burcham was always praising Mr. Challen, and Mr. Challen as frequently lauded the public spirit of Mr. Burcham; and one day, over a friendly glass, some one said, "Now if this long-talked-of church doesn't come to something in your year of office, gentlemen, it never will at all." A short pithy sentence has something ominous and something stirring in it; so this mere quiz and banter acted on the ambition of this dealer in timber and this flogger of boys, like the witch's salutation in *Macbeth*. "Then," said Mr. Burcham, "I

should like to be the man to lay the foundation-stone." "And I," said Mr. Challen, "would give 20*l.* to put the weathercock on the spire."

From that hour Messrs. Burcham and Challen vowed they would immortalise themselves. "They didn't mind if they did something the world called rash." It was rash—very rash, indeed—and much moral courage was required at that time of day, for such men to give anything above 5*l.* for a church. If the recorded fact that "This was built when Caius and Manlius were consuls," looked well in ancient times, what greater honour than a black board and gold letters bracketing the brotherly names of Burcham and of Challen? So they went about and talked for some few days about there being no public spirit in the town—meaning, of course, that they engrossed it all in their own persons; and eventually, after some conference with the Rector, Mr. Challen, being mayor, called a public meeting, with long notice, "to consider the propriety of having a new church to relieve the spiritual destitution of the poor of Lachford."

Meanwhile, two or three more, to whom "time was no object," seeing they rarely did anything with it, were added to their councils: and then Mr. Burcham gave a cabinet-dinner to Mr. Challen, and Mr. Challen had a yet larger party for Mr. Burcham. "Success to the new church," was drunk: as also "Church and State," which Mr. Burcham hoped never might dissolve partnership: though, probably, whereabouts they were joined, and the precise cuts that would part them, and which had the best of the bargain, he had never inquired.

After these two dinners, the new church had come to be talked of so much, that our churchwardens seemed taken at their word, and pledged in honour, as public-spirited men, to carry it through. They began for the honour of the borough, and were obliged to go on for the honour of themselves. In politics they were Tories—not that either of them could very accurately rehearse the articles of his political belief—few Lachford people could; but they voted on the Tory side, and were shown up at every slip in *The Whig*, a Dissenters' paper. So, soon there appeared an article, saying that "the Church party of Lachford having, like Rip Van Winkle, been sound asleep for the last twenty years, was likely to be thoroughly roused up by a Tory Mayor and a Tory Schoolmaster, the latter ambitious of laying the first stone; but the Mayor, with his every-day eye to the main chance, had bargained to put a bran new weathercock (typical of his own political career) on the top of the spire, as soon

as ever—*not before*—the said spire was built.—Very generous of him, no doubt."

Soon after, the Tory paper replied to their "foul-mouthed contemporary" in a way that pledged the whole Tory party to back up the Mayor.

By this time there was a new motive power, a new stream running through the town of Lachford; or let us say, a new current and a valuable trade-wind had set in. So, the masons, the architects, the builders, and the owners of building-land, were not long in swelling this stream and in adding their puff to this trade-wind, on purpose that it might turn their little machinery, or swell their sails, and bring grist to their respective mills. But, of all eye-teeth, those of the landowners were set the sharpest. Every damp pit for "rubbish to be shot" rose wonderfully in value; as also did quarry-stone; and owners grew churchmen and charitable all in a day.

One man, whose field seemed to be the identical place that Deucalion and Pyrrha strewed with stone, seemed wonderfully liberal in offering part as a present for the church, though Mr. Challen winked and said a church would give tenfold value to the remainder.

Another said he would subscribe 50*l.* if the church were built on his ground; at the same time asking a price to repay the 50*l.* and something more. And as to the stone that was offered, some of it was quite a geological curiosity, and a fine exemplification of what building-stone ought not to be.

Homer's race of "inventive men" is not extinct. The inventive powers of half the town and trade of Lachford were tried to turn this move to their own private account, and with just as little regard for the church as the turnspit dog has for the cook. If it is a sign something is going to happen when men talk to each other at the corners of the streets, all was going well no doubt: for, Lachford people talked of nothing else. Indeed, the new church was a positive gain in that dull town, if it were only to divert and ventilate the people's mind; for "there never was such a place for talking about each other's concerns as our town of Lachford."

Lachford diversions were rarities. Lachford fair was a time to look forward to, certainly, as also was the fair ball, where the county quadrille kept as clear from the town quadrille as if there were a dread of some epidemic. This past, there was nothing to talk of, except "how dull everything was," up to Christmas; and then, only the fat beasts and plums and raisins, all holly and

red berries, till they came to ring out the old year—as if they had had enough of the old gentleman—and to ring in the new year—as if they had everything to hope from the young one.

What wonder, then, that the idea of a Church Meeting—ay, and the Bishop to preside, supported by one of the borough members at least, and ever so many county gentlemen—that this should excite pleasurable sensations in the minds of all parties?

The day for the great Church Meeting dawned at last. Every one in the town had offered a luncheon to some friends from the country. The three Misses E. wouldn't rest till they had prevailed on their papa, a county magistrate, to come; though, he said, he knew it would end in their getting some money out of his pocket. Then Mrs. Vine was to fill the Rectory with Mr. and Mrs. Wentworth, who "had plenty of money if they would but part with it;" Mrs. Lyte, who subscribed to everything; and Mrs. Dyne, who, she was sure, ought to subscribe, for she was the widow of a canon genteelly provided for. This coterie was specially invited to lunch with the Bishop, the Archdeacon, and the first families of the county, who would thus see that our Rector's wife could introduce great people as well as they could.

The Mayor had a splendid luncheon in the Hall, and the timber-yard coat was taken off and the mayor's robes put on; and little Mr. Challen was for that day allowed to hand round the old corporation tankards to the first people in the land. Then the bells were set ringing, vehicles rattled in, all the town looked out, and the excitement was pretty general that day.

Mr. Challen was a practical man, of tangible results in pounds, shillings, and pence. Mr. Burcham was the same: he delighted in what he called business, and he would stick on "extras" cruelly; but for all that, when a father turned bankrupt I have known him give the boy the run of the school and the "run of his teeth" for nothing. So there might have been worse men than these to build a church.—Well, these two gentlemen had resolved on a surprise and an impression, no less than this:—

"The Churchwardens of Lachford: 25*l.* Mr. Challen; 25*l.* Mr. Burcham!"

All this they kept to themselves.

Just as the clock struck two, the Bishop of Z. was ushered by the Rector into the Mayor's room, adjoining the Hall, and he at once smiled so courteously on Mr. Challen—whose face became as red as his robes—that the little man expected the pleasure of a long and flattering conversation. But no man ever went straighter to the point than the Bishop of Z., and no man could convey more

without even speaking at all. So, Mr. Challen, all in a minute, found himself drawn into a quiet corner, and heard in a most confidential whisper, "Have you any paper for subscriptions, Mr. Mayor?"

"Yes, my lord, I have a ——"

"Headed with anything, Mr. Mayor?"

"Certainly, my lord; done in a minute:—The Churchwardens of Lachford, 25*l.* each."

"Allow me—The Churchwardens of Lachford, conjointly, 50*l.* —thus—much better—you see. Have this paper ready till I ask for it"—still all in a whisper—and then in the same breath, aloud—"It is your time, I think, now, Mr. Mayor. So, we will proceed to your Hall for this most important business."

All this, with his lordship, was the work of half a minute. The Town Hall was crowded with persons who came, because others came, "to make a day of it," or because the Bishop was expected, not one in twenty caring the least whether a church were built or not. The description of a public meeting in the Acts of the Apostles is true to life,—"Some cried one thing, some another; and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together."

The Bishop took the chair, and, after all had joined in a Collect for Divine Aid, Mr. Challen was asked to tell the purport of the meeting, and then four or five others rose in turn, with the usual slips of paper twirling in their fingers, and enlarged on the spiritual destitution of the poor, and the efforts made for church extension in other places; and then the Bishop, with his usual tact, and a little touch of satire at the same time, spoke.

"It was, indeed, high time he was sent for. From Lachford lips he had now heard that one part of the town was as little Christian as Timbuctoo; that pews were squared and red-curtained; and the poor had been treated much like the red men of North America, giving place before the white till they disappeared altogether. However, he must not now be severe, though Lachford had for years been the crying shame of the diocese, because the present meeting had virtually acknowledged the duty of providing for those they had so ruthlessly thrust out. And first and foremost" ("Where's that paper?" he said, aside), "here are your respected churchwardens setting a most excellent example, and one of these gentlemen also, your mayor—your mayor—yes—(as if a bright idea struck him) therefore the representative of Her Majesty; so nothing could be more in character with the present movement, for our friend Mr. Challen," he said, slowly

and gracefully, every eye in the room having time to centre its rays on the little man's rubicund countenance, "combined Church and State in his own person. Delightful that the movement should have originated in the laity!—(here was a hit at the Rector)—a fact that while it made us, in some respects, he feared, blush for the past, also gave bright hopes of the future. However, he would say no more. There had been words enough—now, my good Christian friends, for deeds. Yes, action, action, action! and the first to 'rush into the breach' were (holding up the paper, and shaking and cracking it, while pulling out his eye-glass)—were—

"'The Churchwardens of Lachford . . . £50.'"

"Hurray!" cried Sam Richards, Mr. Challen's foreman in the timber-yard, digging his neighbour in the ribs. "Hurray! hurray!" vociferated Mr. Burcham's first-class, who had been sucking lollipops all the time. Of course everybody then hurrayed—nothing is more catching. "Well done our side!" shouted, gruffly and half-intelligible, Tom Vicars, an idle, smoking Cantab, afterwards rusticated and sent out of the country. Still Tom did good service that day by keeping up the cheering.

The Bishop saw his opportunity, and glancing interrogatively round, as auctioneers do for a bidding, said, "I thought so: our—good—Rector, 50*l.*"—Hurray! hurray! And then looking up to the M.P., "Yes, and our worthy representative, 50*l.*"—Hurray! hurray! No lack of hurray—Tom Vicars took care of that, nudging Burcham's boys, till the ladies hurrayed, too, and waved handkerchiefs in their enthusiasm. A great man's compliments or a lady's smile has drawn, does draw, and ever will draw money to the end of time. Then, there was the rivalry and the sense of public spirit to edge them on. "What! should the Weston family be hurrayed, indeed, and have their names published, and the Fogle family passed by? No, never!" So, on they went, one after another, bidding from 30*l.* to 50*l.*, till there was at last a check—a slight pause. This was, indeed, a most trying and critical moment; but—with great presence of mind—Mr. Challen rushed to the rescue. "Mr. Bishop (oh! dear me! My Lord, I should say—thousand pardons), the money won't all be wanted at once—none under two months—and then three instalments in two years."

"Excellent! very convenient, Mr. Mayor," said his Lordship. "Then some of the tens and twenties we can take as both for this year and next—double, in fact." Several consented—others put down so much each year. The Bishop gave 50*l.* each year; and

the end of all was, that a meeting, consisting nine-tenths of people who only came as they would to a morning concert, made up a fund of 1500*l.* to start with.

It was a sense of gentility and the excitement that did it. Even charity (so called) can't fight in cold blood.—It was the ladies that did it; for, as Peter Pindar says, "The cocks fight better when the hens are by."—It was Tom Vicars' cheering and the Bishop's compliments that did it; there's nothing men will spend more on than their own vanity.—Persons subscribe at a public meeting for what they don't care, just as they bid at auctions for what they don't want.

Of course, a Committee was appointed to collect. But now all Lachford was committed to the measure, and it had "become a regular thing;" and people will always pay "for a regular thing," and to be in the fashion, quite irrespectively of the object.

This is no cynical denial of all goodness.—I admit there was true charity somewhere, and true piety somewhere, or no church would ever have been built. But God ruleth over all. Even the bad are made good instruments in His hands, and all the petty streams of rivalry, vanity, and ambition, are embodied in one great motive-power to turn the mighty machinery He hath created.

No goodness, indeed! will any one dare to say? Why, there was Andrew Bean, a clergyman's son, who had married for love his squire's daughter—squire died penniless, Actæon-like, eaten up by his own kennel of dogs. Andrew, a strong-backed fellow, have I seen dragging his sick wife about in a chair—couldn't afford a house, so "love in lodgings,"—well, he gave 5*l.* a-year.

No goodness! There was poor Miss Hatchett, who had but 50*l.* a-year and what she could earn by daily-governessing. Her sister married a scamp who deserted her: she died of twins, and both twins lived; and Miss Hatchett let them eat of her bread and drink of her cup. Even she gave 1*l.* a-year. That good fellow, Challen, told me he was so ashamed to take her money that he found her an extra pupil to make it up.

No goodness! I remember plenty of it. Why old Adam Hall, the sawyer, and his decent spouse, now past their work, had laid up in their money-box for the day of sickness or necessity some few pounds. Every penny could tell of a struggle between extra tea, or fresh meat that their "soul did love," and a high resolve that neither should follow the other in parish coffin to the grave; and now that money-box was unscrewed, a piece of gold taken out, and, with a vital faith we all must envy, offered with palsied hand as to the Lord.

False and hollow is the philosophy that would depreciate the aristocracy of birth: nay, where the guineas are medals in the school of industry, we scorn not the aristocracy of wealth: but, what if we could discern God's own nobility?—the great in moral victories, the pure in spirit and the great in soul, heirs of "habitations not made with hands, eternal in the heavens!" I have often thought I knew of one: her story may seem trifling, but it shall be told:—

Hannah Hutchins had been for thirty years a kind of lady-chamberlain, ushering many a little innocent into this evil world. Where there was money, she served for money; where no money, for a cup of tea; where tea was short, she "lent it to the Lord." One day, hearing a suspicious run-away knock, she hobbled down one pair of stairs in time to espy the saucy Tommy Martin scampering round the corner. Many an old woman would have armed herself with a short-handle broom—almost all would have committed "a breach of the *peace*;" but Goody Hutchins only thought it a pity that Tommy should have no one to "larn him better," so she gave up a penny a-week of her tea-and-snuff money to help his mother to put him to school! Really, this is as good a commentary on the Gospel as Corporal Trim's was on the Law.

"'Prithee, Trim,' quoth my father, turning round to him, 'what dost thou mean by 'honouring thy father and mother?'"

''Allowing them, an' please your honour, three halfpence a-day out of my pay when they grow old.' 'And didst thou do that, Trim?' said Yorick. 'He did, indeed,' replied my uncle Toby. 'Then, Trim,' said Yorick, springing out of his chair and taking the corporal by the hand, 'thou art the best commentator upon that part of the Decalogue; and I honour thee more for it than if thou hadst a hand in the Talmud itself.'"

CHAPTER XII.

MY LABOURS BEGIN OUT-OF-DOORS — MY TROUBLES BEGIN IN-DOORS — MY FAMILY BEGINS TOO — AND ALTOGETHER THINGS LOOK SERIOUS.

As I had no church as yet to which to invite my parishioners, I made the most of cottage lectures. I had many small streets, and I endeavoured to secure one house in each in which some little congregation could be called together. "The Church of England," it has been said, "if ever it dies, will die of a new complaint called 'overmuch gentility.'" I was resolved that should not be my fault. With every tone and gesture I suited myself to the ways and habits of my parish Arabs; for Arabs they were, many of them, male as well as female.

Sometimes, while I was thus suiting my words, tone, and topics to their unlettered minds, the surgeon or some other person of education would come in; this always stopped me at once, unless the intruder would agree to stand out of sight, and allow me quite to forget his presence. This forcibly brought before me the difficulty of preaching to a congregation comprising the extremes of barbarism on the one hand, and of refinement on the other. A ragged population must have a ragged church or a room, with ministers and measures all to suit.

From my experience, I am convinced that a Church and the Church Service are not by any means the first step for converting — for it is converting — the heathen of our overgrown towns. It is not derogatory to our services to say that we may find an extreme case to which they do not so well apply. Our military system may be all very good, but "fix bayonets and charge!" was an order that required some little modification when tried among the Kaffirs. Our National Schools, with "cards of nomination," and "rules drawn up by the committee," was an order of things intended for the ragged regiments of our city Arabs; but, much to the surprise of some persons, it appeared that young gentlemen

are not the only boys who would never go to school if they had no fathers to make them.

Full-grown Arabs on a Sunday must be humoured in the same way. I found many would come to the end of the street for a cottage lecture who "had no clothes to come to church," and, indeed, no habits or inclination either.

In these lectures I could study and adapt myself to the exact sense and manner of my little flock.

The experienced counsel addresses a common jury one by one. He looks each in the face by turns, and tries topic after topic till the expression of John's eyes betrays that he is convinced. This personal style of address requires a limited audience. It is impracticable in a church; and therefore Church sermons suppose some degree of initiation in the hearer. As a means of teaching the first elements to the ignorant, or of converting the heathen, a Church and the Liturgy is about as little suited as Eton College and Latin and Greek would be to parish boys. Both are invaluable institutions within a reasonable sphere, but both require preparatory education to prove generally available.

Something like a locomotive chapel, if it were only a tent or awning to hold twenty or thirty persons, would be a good invention for an unreclaimed district. Certainly, the more splendid the church, the less chance there is of the poor man feeling it is intended for him. Corrugated-iron buildings, as at Kensington, cost only from twenty to twenty-five shillings a-sitting.

"For the purposes of conversion," said a zealous member of the Tractarians, "I find our Sunday services quite useless. I frequently look around my congregation of heavy, sleek farm-labourers, and see that scarcely one is joining in the prayers."

The Church Prayers simply serve to render the unreclaimed —those wholly unused to divine worship— too weary for the sermon: and it must never be forgotten that the sermon to such persons is the only tidings of salvation they can ever hear. It matters not to them that the Lessons, Epistles, and Gospels, form one beautiful scheme of instruction. You might as well expect a fly to see the symmetry of St. Paul's. The ignorant can never follow a connected system. The poor man's religion is the result of single texts, parables, and scripture characters.

Many proposals have been made for shortening our Church Service: but most remedies have involved evils worse than the complaint. I would suggest that the Bishop should, on application from the minister of any congregation seemingly exceptional, make a suitable selection from the Liturgy for their special

use. The evil is great—very great under the present uncompromising system. Intense and hearty prayer sustained throughout is to thousands a physical impossibility in church.

This remark applies less to the literary and professional classes. Such persons are little aware of the difficulties of those who have never been used to apply their minds.

As to educated persons, the Liturgy, though obviously capable of an improved arrangement, is as well suited already as we can reasonably expect in anything from the hand of man, where so many points and parties must be considered. When the singing is not too long—when the reader is not tediously slow, emphasizing, as some do, a list of Jewish names, or a page of ancient history, as slowly as he should read the finest chapters of St. John; and when the sermon is limited to twenty minutes (which is quite as long as persons ordinarily listen), then the service is over in an hour and thirty-five or forty minutes, and few persons would wish it to be shorter.

To speak here of the beauty of the Liturgy, it is precisely that description of beauty which—however much persons may feel bound to eulogise it—not one in ten, even of a West-end congregation, really appreciates. This it is easy to detect from the words and style of the eulogy we hear.

But, whoever will try to express the ideas of our Liturgy in other words, will find that the "sweet music of speech" rarely allows you to change a note. There is also a simple dignity and a certain Hebraic strength and majesty of words, which, it will soon appear, has exhausted all the treasures of the English language. Neither can there be a stronger confirmation of this opinion than we read in new prayers written for our occasional Thanksgivings or Humiliation. Such prayers are to the Liturgy very like what a Cantab's Greek verses are to Sophocles. They are nothing but "tags," or bits of liturgical stereotype.

To return. It will easily be understood that my people required to be taught to come to church, and they wanted a kind of preparatory school in the paths of devotion.

A church, with its services, to them was like a university to a child. They required to be taught "precept upon precept and line upon line." As to "being all things to all men," and adapting my services to my disciples, this I found to be impossible. I was clad in heavy armour; and, in order to be orthodox, I was expected, as it were, to use cannon to kill sparrows. So, with these restrictions, I did not look forward very hopefully to the opening of my new church.

Meanwhile, I persevered with visiting the sick and with cottage services, and by the time I had made up my aforesaid parish register I had some acquaintance with my people. "The way to a poor man's heart," said Dr. Chalmers, "is to enter his house. When there, many kind offices lie in your power. For instance, you may sign pay-warrants or club-certificates; you may read, or perhaps write a letter, or explain the whereabouts of the son's regiment in foreign parts; or help some poor girl, as I did once, to follow her husband, who had gone off with the recruiting-sergeant."—A ticket for a dispensary, a good word to the Board of Guardians, or an order for a parish coffin, may all become an earnest of good will.

As to cottage economy, setting up the stewpan above the gridiron, and doing the oldest things "the newest kind of ways," I was careful not to go too far in advance of their habits; for, by so doing, the very kind lady of the Rectory of C. was burnt in effigy the first fifth of November next after the commencement of her charitable operations.

All this was hard work. It is wonderful how exhausting it is to visit from house to house. A fresh supply of energy seems to be drawn from you, and more and more electric sparks to be discharged by every new object of interest. The foul atmosphere of cottages, especially in hot weather, adds very much to other depressing influences; nor is it a slight irritation to the nerves that almost all you do or say must be in defiance of constant interruptions. The steam of a washtub, the squalling of children, or the noises in the street, all make the reality of a parson's visits in a town parish very different from any layman's idea of it. We read of Christian heroism amidst fire and sword, so these things may seem slight; but when, in addition to the usual repelling odours of sick-rooms, parasitical little animals nestle in your sleeves, and you are afraid to handle anything without gloves, for fear of a very vulgar cutaneous complaint, then no mere flash of enthusiasm, nothing less than a stern sense of duty, will enable you to persevere.

The stirring occasion aids the martyr; and as to fiery trials, it is well known that a shower of rain will disperse a mob as well as bullets.

But my perseverance in the path of duty was tried in another way.

Ellen's spirits were affected, and her health required care and attention. Our close rooms and want of ventilation now began to produce a visible effect. Even the water she could not relish:

so, positively, the simple elements in their purity were now beyond our means! I was advised to keep her much in the open air, and not to leave her too much alone, and to do all I could to divert her mind.—The very day that I received that advice, a poor sick woman, living on parish pay, said, "Sir, doctor tells me to eat and drink all that is nourishing and strengthening, but where am I to get it from?" This was a lesson for me. At that moment I could, indeed, enter feelingly into the trials of the poor. "Beware," said the Bishop of Oxford, "of giving only the *parings* of your time to your parish." I am not vindicating: I am only relating. But I am afraid I did pare and cut down very rigidly the time that was to divide me from my pale and desponding wife. Mrs. Vine seemed kindly disposed; but poverty has a remarkable effect in keeping genteel people at a respectful distance.

Mrs. Vine soon grew tired of our lodgings, and began to make up for her inattention by hoping that we should drop in at the Rectory, just in a friendly way, whenever we pleased. But, without a maid to assist, Ellen found that dressing was a fatigue, and undressing and putting away was a fatigue again, at this particular period; and after all her trouble, a sense of obligation and inferiority marred our happiness when out, and returning to cold comfort was doubly unpleasant by the contrast when we came back; so, by degrees, that happened which ever will happen—reduced gentlefolks, however much they are respected, soon find that society loses its charm when they can no longer enjoy it on equal terms.

No doubt abstract virtue, and moral worth and respectability, have nothing to do with massive plate or braided liveries. And this truth we enunciated and told each other over and over again, a great many times; but, to say the honest truth, we could not, for all that, reason ourselves out of a certain creeping half-pay or second-class sensation. Ladies feel this more than gentlemen; and my poor Ellen, though she never confessed it till years after, found it was not so easy a matter to "hold up her head" in a shabby bonnet.

However, I did all I could to divert her: not that I was likely to be very amusing, for every day I had pretty well talked myself out of breath in the parish before I returned to her. Still, Ellen was interested in my success among the people; so we talked of that, as well as of "the short and simple annals of the poor." I had often thought of the difference she must have felt between the light-hearted buoyancy and spirits of the

lover, and the subdued and silent habit of the careworn husband. Yes, the time soon comes when fascinations pass away like froth, when the stern battle of life must be fought in earnest, and when a happy temper and a kind heart, in a husband or a wife, are as oil to our wounds and marrow to our bones.

One great difficulty with which we had to contend was to keep vulgar people at a proper distance. For, because it was evident we could not afford to visit in the better circle, the secondary set thought, as a matter of course, they could claim us for their own. We accepted one invitation in our ignorance, and the title of a "Reverend" in the party seemed to exalt them mightily; but we soon learnt that, as Bacon said of the iron and the clay in Nebuchadnezzar's image, we might mix, but never could incorporate. Ellen literally shrank and recoiled before the salient manners and the heart-and-hand advances of the Lachford gentlemen. We could not rival their free, coarse laugh, and boisterous mirth: we could not warm up to their temperature. So, we seemed cold and proud, and felt to them like two icebergs in the room.

These evening parties ended with suppers, and spirits-and-water afterwards. Then the conversation became rather free, and very personal. Some talked loudly of the cost of house-rent, and glanced at our living in lodgings. I understood their meaning—"that we need not hold up our heads so high, for we were poor."

It is a law of our nature that, where there is no doubt or uncertainty, we become tranquil and resigned. To this state we were fast advancing, and were agreeing to accept poverty as our portion, and to settle down composedly, like poor people, and to think no more about it than we could help.

Here was one dangerous corner turned. The most harassing and jack-o'-lantern chase in this life is trying not to suit ourselves to circumstances, but circumstances to ourselves. A little child who had never read of Canute, still less of Dame Partington, in Sydney's Smith's story, once said in my hearing—"Go back, sea, and not wet Miss Edith." But Solomon's idea of wisdom was to sail with the stream, to commit yourself to the ways of Him who holds the sea in the hollow of His hand, and to seek, with the least possible fret or friction, to turn in the groove His allwise economy assigns.

When we had already begun to be reconciled to our lot—since the world never stands still—something else happened to divert our minds. For, I have observed through life, that Pro-

vidence often sends a second trouble as a kind of alternative, or a counter-irritation, as well as a commentary, on the first. Mrs. Vine paid another visit, with some more patterns for baby-linen, and after a great deal of interesting conversation she advised that her doctor and her nurse, already bespoken, should have notice that their services would soon be required.

It is now time I should leave my reader to his or her own imaginations. If a child were any novelty it were different, but "when," as Charles Lamb says, "every blind alley swarms with them," and the poorer and more squalid people are the more they seem to have; when fifty yards of litter in every street in Belgravia tells of one at least, if not twins; when teething, and convulsions, and measles, and scarlatina, still leave enough, and more than enough, to keep the parents at their wits' ends to the end of their natural lives; I may fairly presume that I can hardly tell anything new about the birth of my little darling. Though it is wonderful what a stir is made in a house about a little creature that is no bigger than a rabbit.

No sooner was the child born, or even hourly expected, than I was set quite on one side in my small establishment, as if I were nobody. Economy was out of the question: what with the doctor and nurse, and the nurse's drinkables, and Mrs. Vine, and the landlord's wife, every one ordering everything that came into their heads, I was nearly ruined.

Before the dear little stranger had arrived I had thought, "What shall I do? I know nothing about what is right or proper on such occasions." But I soon found out my mistake: there were plenty of persons ready enough to do anything without me. My voice from the first hour was utterly drowned, and my very existence was ignored by the womankind up-stairs and down, and when first I went to see my own dear offspring the nurse just treated me with a peep, and then hinted I might make myself scarce, as if it were of the least possible concern to me. Indeed, though nothing could be more unfair, for it was not my fault, both Mrs. Vine and the nurse said something like, "Oh, yes! all very easy for you to sit there easy and comfortable, but ——" They meant to say that Nature had treated us too well a great deal. Then caudle, and ale and gin for Mrs. Mobcap, and biscuit-powder and "tops-and-bottoms" for the baby, all came in so regularly, that they seemed resolved that all due honours should be paid to the child, however little they thought about the father.

I was now forcibly reminded of Tristram Shandy's truthful

observation, that "of all the puzzling riddles in the marriage state there is not one that hath more intricacies in it than this—that, from the very moment the mistress of the house is brought to bed, every female in it, from my lady's gentlewoman down to the cinder-wench, becomes an inch taller for it, and gives herself more airs upon that single inch than upon all her other inches put together."

I now had many invitations. People said, "Now you are a bachelor you must spend an evening with us." Congratulations were heaped upon me, and healths were drunk in liquids of every kind but water, from gin-punch to champagne. I told Mr. Bolton, the doctor, that if it had only been a little later I might have had a house to myself; for it was so very inconvenient to have my wife put to bed in lodgings, as I had to sleep on the sofa: neither had I any bed to offer my mother, or she might have come and acted Lucina on the occasion.

He replied: "That is what everybody tells me. It never is convenient. I have attended some hundreds of little infants, and never knew one convenient yet."

In course of time, we had some handsome presents of caps and robes from the family, but all was a great deal too fine for us: for, nothing looks so beggarly as a fine-worked robe with a cheap tawdry nurse. Aunt Charlotte sent a silver fork and spoon after the old fashion, and suggested that, to enable her to stand godmother without a proxy, we should have it, as she wrote, "½ *baptized*," and "*properly christened*" when we came to see her.—Such were the ideas of a Holy Sacrament in those days!

Some of the Church-building Committee asked me to wait three months, and have the christening on the day of consecration.

Time was not standing still. Even the dull town of Lachford could not either talk of or toast one baby above a fortnight; and by the end of the month we had got rid of the nurse, and had returned her empty beer-barrel, and had hired a good strong girl to carry the baby, and on we jogged along the road of life—like a soldier's wife by help of the baggage-waggon—having added a great deal to the encumbrance and not one whit to the supplies of the common weal.

I christened my daughter in the old church with the name of Alice; and I had an amusing letter on the occasion from my old friend Brereton, in which he programmed the drama of life thus commenced with vaccination, teething, long-coating, and short ditto, measles, hooping-cough, and the full complement of youthful

complaints, as well as schooling, being danced, Frenched, Rollined, Humed, Russell-Modern-Europed, and otherwise accomplished, and then "introduced." He also allowed for one disappointment at least, and the whole year hysterical, ending with matrimony, and so far completing the circle to the point at which we had ourselves arrived. Such is life!

In my parish, meanwhile, I had begun the only kind of schools that seemed available for a heathen district, where we have to deal with children whose parents must be coaxed and humoured into schooling. Anything like a large National School simply attracts those who would otherwise find dames for themselves. And however ignorant these dames may be, I never could see a set of childish monitors—on an average rarely of ten years of age—who are the principal teachers in large schools, without feeling great doubt of the superiority of the system.

Now, just as ladies are coaxed into a little education by Mr. Evergoeasy, of the Catcham Universological-and-General-fitting Establishment, though the same mothers will not endure the rigid rules and dictation of a public school, even so I found that poor women will send their children to Mrs. Whipham, "quite handy, in the same street,"—who perhaps will mind the baby or boil the kettle into the bargain—though they will never endure the teasing rigidity of National School regulations, nor care to accept a ticket as a gift.

Soon I started two dames with twenty children each. The balance it cost me and my friends was about a penny a-week for each child, or at the rate of rather more than twenty-pounds a-year for a hundred children, and those ragged children such as would never have entered a well-disciplined school. This school-machinery was kept in order by my dropping in, unexpectedly, two or three times a-week and examining the children, as also by my saying a complimentary word in passing to the parents, and always giving them a preference with any charity distributions. By appointing one or two lady-visitors to each school, the system would be complete.

Consider the economy. Here, as parents pay part, we may have children schooled at twenty pounds a-hundred, and no cost for school-building. The Lachford National School cost eighty pounds a-hundred!

Consider the advantages. You teach those who most want teaching. This is the Ragged School principle. Also, since dames act as monitors, and visitors help the dames; and since each dame can bring her own flock to church, or to one large

Sunday-schoolroom, if there is one, a clergyman has all the advantage he can desire.

This system has far more moral influence—far more of real education in it, than any other you can devise. "All that the children learn in these big schools," said Hannah Mason, "is impudence and hollowing." Certainly, the large National Schools are better than none, and some are very good; yet the superiority of many is very questionable. The advocates of these schools speak of "the ignorance of old dames," as if child-monitors—mere parrots—were so much more profound; but, surely, dames are likely to feel some little instinct of responsibility, and may be presumed to be not quite as indifferent to bad habits in children as those poor brats called monitors. For, we must always remember that it is the monitor who really does the work. The idea that a single master should influence the *morale* of a large school can only be entertained by persons who believe, homœopathically, that the smaller the quantity is the greater the effect. At all events, dames are better for a Ragged District; and while they can only teach children to read, they are equal to all that is required of them; for, the clergyman and Christian friends must do the rest.

It was now drawing near the day for the Consecration of my new church, and all my mental pictures of that solemnity contained, as one interesting figure in strong relief, my good aunt, first of all, rapt in the quiet fervour of her prayers, and afterwards watching the very lips of her nephew—her "own dear child," as she always spoke of me—as he preached his first sermon where a pastor and congregation, till that day, had never been. She had said such a pleasure could never be in store for her: but something, surely, must happen to thwart a wish too engrossing for the state of this life? Such forebodings are natural on every great occasion, but in the present instance, I am sorry to say, they augured truth; for, one morning, Susan found her mistress in a fit. I was speedily summoned to her bed-side, but she never regained her consciousness, and died on the third day.

The first person I saw at her house was the Rev. ——, who was at that time one of the most distinguished of the Evangelical clergy—her favourite preacher and friend. He knew Susan as well as he knew her mistress, and saw the one at his church as often as the other. When he first came into the room, he was laughing at something which had just been said to him, and was in high spirits—too high, indeed, for my feelings at that moment. But the Rev. —— never imagined that nephews grieved for

rich aunts; neither, amidst all the scenes of sorrow he so often witnessed, could he afford to sympathise very deeply, except on great occasions. Besides, the Rev. —— was really a religious man, and, therefore, perfectly natural. He was by no means a man to encumber himself with that sanctimonious cast of features which pseudo-Evangelicals, whatever their temperament and flow of spirits, never venture to throw off.

There is a certain Maw-worm countenance—a certain enunciation of holy motives, which men really holy leave us to take for granted; there is a falsetto tone of cant and insincerity, by which unworthy followers disgust all honest men with the very name of Evangelical. Mr. Foster wrote an Essay on the "Aversion of Men of Taste to Evangelical Religion." It is not pure Evangelicalism which creates a prejudice; it is the affectation of it. And affectation, when analysed, is nothing less than a lie in a state of solution—a flimsy plating, through which we see the baser metal.

"We too often hear from our pulpits," complains the Rev. Canon Stowell, "a great deal of Evangelical sound, when there is not much of Evangelical sense." If it is laughable to hear the child use the language of the man, it is really painful to hear holy words, or the deeper mysteries of our faith, from those who are too much "babes" to feel them; and when we actually hear those sacred words from a preacher without the pretence of a meaning, but only as a kind of hammering and stammering for something to say; or when we hear them from a morning visitor, as a badge of his or her religious party—this is indeed repulsive.

I confess, therefore, that on this occasion I was quite taken by surprise with the free, manly address, and natural, unaffected manner, of the Rev. ——, for I had measured him by his imitators, and those who flattered and fawned on him,—by no means a small party in the town of Blindham; and it cannot be supposed, that when all Blindham had conspired to worship and spoil him —by notes of admiration sympathetically conveyed in church, and by slippers, cough-lozenges, worked markers, and presents of all kinds—that so much flattery and so much crotchet should be quite without effect. For, flattered he was, in all kinds of ways.

One trick of the Blindham tradesmen was, to take sittings in the Rev. ——'s church, and to quote his sermons to customers, and to have the *Record* newspaper on the counter. The Rev. —— was alive to all this, and talked shrewdly of its signs and symptoms; but he was, to some extent, the dupe of these pretenders all the same: for flattery never will be quite without effect.

Even the tea-and-Bible parties, so common at Blindham, were simply a silly imitation of things sound in themselves. But, because every Christian must revere the piety of two or three devout souls, who meet to "take sweet counsel together, and walk to the house of God as friends," it does not follow that it is wise to invite a party of twenty people, young and old, to show off their flounces and figures before and after a solemn exposition and prayer, prefaced with tea and muffins, and ended with cake and lemonade. I speak feelingly on this subject, because, when I was a boy on a visit at Blindham, I saw rather too much of this.

The Rev. —— knew human nature well, and drew forth from his enemies the remark, "He must, indeed, be a wicked man himself to be able so skilfully to probe the wickedness of others." Susan's church attendance did not deceive him. He knew it was more than her place was worth to do otherwise. And his first words to me were very significant: "If you will take my advice, sir, you will look well to the drawers and the purse, for Mrs. Susan seems to me to have lived on the blind side of Miss Austin for some time."

In the first days of distraction, excitement, and busy arrangements, I felt but little. The stroke of death, that deprives us of a friend, is like a shock from the paw of the lion or the tiger, which, it is said, paralyses all sensation—a providential mercy to its prey. But when my feelings had recovered their natural tone and circulation, I felt, for the first time in my life, that I had lost a friend; and this was a loss I had then but lately learnt to realise; for, at Lachford I was, for the first time, among strangers, being before used only to the family circle; and I then for the first time learnt that the courtesy of this world is a kind of barter, and that much of its politeness is only "give and take."

A legacy of 100*l.* was left me, with old-fashioned furniture ample for a small house; but my allowance, with all the rest of aunt's income, reverted to my father—a sad blow to me; but this allowance, I ventured to promise myself, he would continue to pay me as before.

How ungrateful, how unreasonable is a child! However kindly and tenderly nurtured, we leave—how readily do we leave!—the parent's roof; yes, and too often, just when our company would best repay the trouble of our youth; and then, after giving our whole heart to a spouse, on the first moment of difficulty we fancy that parent's arms are open still.—To all this delusion I do, indeed, plead guilty; but the time had come in which I was to be deservedly undeceived.

On approaching my father—he could not attend the funeral —I was shocked to see the deep lines which care and anxiety had graven on his brow. My poor aunt's anticipations had, indeed, proved but too true. Nothing but evil can come of a fever of speculation and hoping to "reap where we have not sown." "He who hasteth to be rich," says the Wise Man, "shall not be innocent." Certainly he has little chance of being happy. I met the family doctor at my father's house, and was anxious to know what was the matter. I found the Doctor talking to my mother when I entered, and I heard him say,—

"Yes; but I am afraid we shall never get that off his stomach."

I said, "Pray, of what nauseous burthen do you complain?"

"Why, the wretched South-Eastern Railway," said the Doctor. "Scrip, Shares, Parliamentary Opposition, and all: he has got all that on his stomach, I am sorry to say, and pills and doses have nothing to do with it. A good digestion is impossible, with such a weight upon his spirits. Besides, he can't sleep a wink; and I should wonder if he could: for opposition lines and luggage-trains keep running over him all night long—I wish the whole concern were at the bottom of the sea."

They only who have experienced such misery can form any idea of the sympathy which exists between a speculator's pulse and spirits and his railway shares. When one goes down the other does the same, till every drop of blood seems drawn from the pallid cheeks, and every spark of energy from the exhausted brain. Such was my poor father's case. The South-Eastern had ploughed furrows on his brow, and had shaken every nerve in his frame. My mother would watch tenderly over him; she would smooth down his pillow; she would chafe his hands and bathe his temples: yet all would not do, for her poor husband looked the very picture of distraction.

Mr. Meadows, the banker, paid him repeated visits, for he often wanted what is called "accommodation"—which means a mere lift on the road to ruin. I witnessed the manner and expression of this man of business during one of those visits, and never did I see such a picture of a poor creditor lying helpless at another's mercy, and hanging on the very breath of his lips. Indeed, the name of Mr. Meadows made all the family nervous. He had been always warning, and almost quarrelled with my father about his speculations.

The courage that will storm a battery or rush into the breach is common; but the courage that will meet an adverse balance or look a commanding creditor steadily in the face, and not quail for

time or respite—this kind of courage is very far more difficult to find.

How can I express my father's sorrow, or his relief?

The death of the best of sisters was like new life to him, because her property in reversion came just in time to restore his shattered fortune. I very soon saw how intimately my father's losses and altered position affected me. He was too full of his own affairs to think of mine; and he soon let fall expressions that betrayed how much comfort he derived from the thought that "Harry was now provided for, and off his hands for ever."

I remained but two days, and then I returned very much sobered, and very grave and serious, to Ellen. As she held up the baby to greet me, its helpless and confiding innocence seemed like a mirror to reflect my hopeless ruin. The sight of the dear child all but choked me, and I smothered it with kisses to hide my emotion.

However, after awhile we came to our little explanations. My dear wife made me, by her fortitude, quite ashamed of my weakness: though really I had no need to be ashamed: for, those are no selfish or unworthy fears which centre entirely in a wife and child. But our position now was not to be disguised: we had ourselves only to depend upon. Come what might, there was now no refuge or resource in the family home; the one dear, kind lady, who would have shared her last crust with us in the hour of need, was now no more; and my stipend of 150*l.* a-year, with 40*l.* a-year due to Ellen, and a little ready-money, was all we now could call our own! And the expenses of my church soon made this little less!

All this came out very seriously and thoughtfully from my lips after a fireside consultation on ways and means. At the same time I looked anxiously at Ellen, to see the effect of news so painful for me to tell. Far from being moved by it, she did not raise her eyes off little Alice, but said, "We shall not starve, Harry, on this small income. And just now the world looks to me so very different from what it did. My world now is all reflected in this dear infant's pretty eyes. Our clouds have gathered very fast, it is true; but our sunshine may come as suddenly. My feelings are now quite changed. I cannot trouble myself about vanity and fashion. I do feel that I have such a treasure—oh! what a solace and a comfort—in this darling baby!—a catch 'er—catch 'er—catch 'er!" tossing the crowing little innocent for me to play with it.

This reception of my sad story on the part of my wife bright-

ened me up, and made my burthen seem well-nigh off my shoulders. For, our troubles always seem less when we calmly measure the length and breadth of them. Add to this, one great relief in the midst of misfortune is that it generally gives us plenty to do; and we often experience positive pleasure even in contending with a pain. And so it was with us. We had now new sums to work, new calculations to make, and new arrangements for a house to be rented, to receive our legacy in furniture. Our wiser plan would have been to have sold the more bulky part of the furniture at Blindham, and to have moved only the lighter articles; but, like other young people, we had to buy our experience as we went along: so in a few days we had a van-load of chairs and tables blocking up the street to our new abode, which shrank into insignificance at the very sight of it.

The neighbours were all alive; they never saw such genteel luggage in that part of the town before.

Of course, haggling with brokers ensued before we could exchange tables and sofas for such as would leave us any room to walk round them. And it was vexatious to find that everything we wanted to take was worth a great deal, and everything we wanted to sell was worth very little. However, our house would hold so small a stock, that we settled down at last with a good supply of odds and ends, and with 20*l.* left of Mr. Griffin's legacy, in the way of ready money. As to Aunt Charlotte's 100*l.*, this, when paid, we both resolved to keep as a reserve for "unforeseen contingencies;" which did not fail to come, in the form of more babies, doctors, and monthly nurses.

When once settled on our reduced establishment we began very happily, because we were both determined to be pleased with everything, and set about feeling as philosophical as we could. We talked of the imaginary wants and conventional superfluities of the present age, and reminded each other that our income would have been ample in the last century—without considering how little that concerned persons with all the habits of the present; and I never came to one of the many moral remarks in my reading about "moderating our desires as a way of increasing our riches," and the like, without quoting it triumphantly to Ellen, and Ellen was just as anxious to save up bits of practical philosophy for me.

We said we had a snug little house, and so it was—snug and compact enough, with two sitting-rooms and three bedrooms, all very small. They did not take carpets much bigger than a full-sized table-cloth. The house was a brick-and-a-half thick, and we

could hear rather more than we liked of our neighbours on either side.

A cheap street has cheap company, and cheap street-cries, ballads, last dying speeches, monkeys, and hurdy-gurdies, all cheap, and by no means complimentary to our taste or discernment. There was also a trade carried on there in mutton-pies, flat fish, damaged fruit, and, indeed, whatever was suited to an income that made people not over-particular. All kinds of such dainties were paraded up and down Pump Street, with a very noisy description of everything, from fresh herrings to pickled salmon. At a house opposite I heard, when my window was open, a constant rapping and tapping that made me feel happy in being our side of the way; but I could not tell what trade was implied. At the end of the week, however, Mr. Gregson—such was the gentleman's name—called for my vote and interest. "Your word has some weight with the guardians," he said; "and I want to contract for the Union *bodies*." It proved that our neighbour was a coffin-maker, and had a most lugubrious pile of "shells" in his back-yard, and wood always steaming, to facilitate that ugly bend which makes man's last sad suit a most unsightly thing to behold. This discovery I carefully concealed from Ellen, for fear it should affect her spirits; and I am glad I did, for another reason: for, it so happened that the first child that was born in Pump Street had a few queer little marks on his breast, which I am sure would have been pronounced coffin-nails if its mother had known anything about it.

The mind, like a vacuum, will fill with something. If we only put our thoughts on a short allowance of genteel and respectable meditations, they will amuse themselves with trifles, or the petty concerns of petty people: and our minds, like ourselves, became not so particular what they fed upon. And so it came to pass, that not only our eyes and ears, but even our thoughts, by degrees, imbibed the atmosphere of Pump Street, and we felt an interest in its toiling and care-worn population.

I must not let my friends imagine that our habits were changed in a day—still less that a small piece of meat, to be carved sparingly with an eye to the morrow—that butter, not to be spread too thick—fire and candles to be lighted late, and put out early—wine and spirits to be things unknown, and even beer to be a rare indulgence, though many a depressing cause craved a stimulant—that these things could very readily cease to gall us. Still, the history of our neighbours made us feel rich in comparison, and so far did much to reconcile us to our lot. Though, the

worst part of all was a sense of servile inferiority and positive degradation. I have seen my poor Ellen, by a deep and burning blush of shame, betray the painful truth that certain menial duties and unaccustomed privations, in matters of sensibility or taste, had caused a conscious emotion into the very depths of her soul. But for all this, there was enough around us to show how many degrees are registered on the scale of human misery: and, one way to learn contentment, is to look down as well as up.

Frequently at midnight, or early in the morning, did we hear Mr. Frank Tinson moving next door. Mr. Tinson was clerk in the goods' office of the railway, and this cold and shivering official's rest depended every night on the punctuality of the trains; and, the more tempestuous or frosty was the weather, the slower was the travelling, and the longer the weary hours for the poor clerk to wait; and most chilly and cutting are those luggage-sheds at all times. "So," said his wife, "by the time Frank comes home, perhaps the fire is gone out, in spite of all that I can do, and the tea is stone-cold on the hob. Oh, dear, there never were such trials!"

Mrs. Tinson had a baby as well as Ellen, and the hedge of their two little gardens was not above three feet high. How, then, could they fail to make mutual inquiries, and to pay mutual compliments, and perhaps weigh their babies one against the other? Mrs. Tinson was "a good sort of woman," and hearty, if not elegant. Such persons always talk of themselves, and never for a moment conceal any opinions they have formed of your affairs. So Mrs. Tinson opened her grief and told her anxieties. All they received from the railway was 90*l.* a-year, and some little she could earn by helping Mr. Gregson in hemming shrouds.

Now this is not a very cheerful operation at the best of times. But lately "things had been very dull,"—by which Mrs. Tinson meant, that people must die a little faster to make it lively—so her earnings were of very little value indeed. "And as to Frank," she said, "no one knows how harassing it is to depend on such a place as his. If he catches colds and bad coughs—and these goods' sheds are windy enough to blow his hat off—he must say nothing at all about it, or he will be thought too weakly for promotion to a better place; and what is worse, if anything goes wrong, the upper ones are sure to blame the under ones, to escape the blame they deserve themselves. So, any day Frank may come home to me and say his place is gone—as John Eddowes did to his wife, who dropped down in a fit as soon as she heard the words—and we all are

penniless! Oh, Mrs. Austin!" she continued, "we do so envy you; for you can afford a girl regular—six pounds a-year I should think you must pay her? But not many people in Pump Street have more than a girl between two, or one between three sometimes, and fine quarrelling this leads to very often. But only think of such a place as yours! A certain 150*l.* a-year! That's near 3*l.* a-week to take to market with you, and no one to threaten to turn you out of your situation, happen what may. And then, there is no mistake about your having a basket-fortune besides; for Frank sees the hamper—a square one, he says, with a lock and two handles, and big enough for a fortnight's washing, and always the railway carriage paid."

"Really," said Ellen, "I am most happy to acknowledge that Mr. Austin's mother frequently sends us a hamper: but I never heard of a 'basket-fortune.'"

"Not heard of a 'basket-fortune!' Bless me! why, when fathers or mothers can't afford to part with money for a daughter in our country, then something in kind, as a part of a pig that they have killed, and meat and goods they can get credit for, and the like, and whatever they can grow or make, perhaps a little spoilt or a misfit,—all this is for the basket, so many times a-month, according to agreement."

This conversation—we excused its impertinence, as not knowing better—convinced us we were watched by many eyes, and wishful eyes too. And we soon found that Mrs. Frank Tinson's was by no means a solitary case, and that the incomes of Pump Street were not only very small but cruelly precarious; and when, shortly after, poor Mr. Crowley, the pianoforte-tuner and music-master, five doors off, was sold up, Ellen's eyes poured forth many a drop of scalding sympathy, as she saw Mrs. Crowley's stair-carpet waving, as a sad signal of distress, at the end of her own broom from the first-floor window.

This will give some idea of our fashionable neighbourhood. Our old Rector and one or two of the clergy spoke of paying us a visit in our new house; but Ellen very wisely wrote to Mrs. Vine, to request her to make known that we must be considered as in retirement for the present, though we look forward to some future day in which we might have the pleasure of receiving our friends as we could wish.

But I must explain the nature of our basket-fortune.

I pity the family of many brothers and sisters where one of the number has married on love and expectations, and left a fond mother every day to remind them of the plenty they enjoy,

and the struggles and short-commons of "those dear, silly young people." It is all very easy for the father to say "they must rough it," and turn the subject of conversation. It is possible that the brothers and sisters may say, "Why, they have made up their minds to it, and it's all their own choice;" but, the heart of a mother does not reason;—it yearns, it throbs, and it feels.

Accordingly, first of all, my dear mother tried if she could not prevail on my father to continue his sister's allowance; but after two or three headaches, real or pretended, as the only effect of her maternal suggestions, the kind, self-denying creature —persevering as fond mothers always are—set about the next best thing she could think of to relieve her Harry, and that dear Ellen whom her silly boy had been so thoughtless—she never could forgive herself for allowing it—as to bring down to poverty, and, what she called, downright misery and starvation.

"What can that basket be for?" said my father, the day it first made its appearance in the hall. "I never ordered it. No doubt it is intended for some other house."

"Never you mind, dear," said my mother. "I ordered it. Sometimes there are things we don't want, and Harry and Ellen would be glad of." And then she waited, I can imagine, to see how her circumvented husband would take it.

"Oh! oh! I see," said my father; "and I suppose, by the look of it, you will have it backwards and forwards pretty often. And it is big enough, certainly; one would think it carried meat to Newgate market." And then my mother kissed him and patted him on the back, and said she was sure he had no objection; and from that hour "that everlasting basket" became, for seven years, the very pivot of my mother's existence, the receptacle of everything my father missed and inquired after, and, indeed, the save-all and the drain of the whole family.

From the time that basket was first set upon its travels, sister Emily found, when she wanted a dress, that all liberty of choice was at an end. She must have nothing that wouldn't stand washing, turning, and dyeing; for mother wanted the reversion of everything for the basket. By degrees the "basket fever," as they all said at home, grew to a fearful height, and affected every movement in the family life. Brother Edward found mother no longer afraid of a gun. Rabbits and even rooks, as well as hares and pheasants, would all fill up her pie. Mother also sent fruit and a batch of preserves—an extra broiling in a white dressing-gown at the kitchen-fire, and in the

dog-days, is no slight proof of love—and vegetables, besides potted meats and home-made cakes, and eggs, and such a quantity of pork and bacon as made my father's pig-keeping a very questionable speculation, with honey and bottles of "pure milk for the children."

This will give some idea of the usual contents of the basket; though I do remember once taking out some castor-oil, some grey powder, pins and needles, and some half-worn brushes. "If they don't want it," mother used to say, when quizzed about her ingenious contrivances, "they need not use it, and they have plenty of poor souls who will be glad of it." But nothing was ever too trifling for persons who have no money for shopping.

None of the family really sympathised in the basket, if they added to its store. "It makes mother so stingy," said Fanny. "We hear of nothing but 'the basket.' We have not half the puddings even, to say nothing of treats and pic-nic parties, we used to have." Then my father, though he submitted, would always get a joke out of it; but the most cruel trial of all the dear lady had to put up with was the cook. It mattered not what cook she hired; one and all hated the very sight of the basket, as if it were death to their hopes and the very grave of their perquisites. All eyed it disdainfully, and one kicked it, as if to touch it with her hand were loss of caste; and "nearly all," said Fanny, when soliloquising on the basket some years after, "took care to talk of 'Mr. Henry's victuals,' and 'having relations a-starving,' and 'such a bare sitivation they never saw the like of.'"

But a mother's love long defied it all. Jokes of the parlour and sneers of the kitchen were all the same. Indeed, were it not that I have been blessed with an opportunity of making some compensation for having been such a drain on the family, I could hardly bear to mention it.

CHAPTER XIII.

HOW MY NEW CHURCH, BUILT WITH MIXED MOTIVES, WAS CONSECRATED WITH MIXED FEELINGS—AND HOW CHURCH CHOIRS ARE NOT ALWAYS HARMONIOUS.

And now the day for consecrating the new church was fixed, and all the clergy around were invited to meet at the Town Hall, and form a procession to the church. Little Mr. Challen had redeemed his pledge, and made his vaunting good. He had actually climbed the ladders from one stage to another, with giddy head and shaky knees, till he finally put the weather-cock on the top of the spire, and then threw up his hat as the old church bells pealed forth a merry salutation, and afterwards confessed he was very glad to find himself safe down again. Mr. Burcham also chuckled and rubbed his hands, as he pointed to so substantial a proof of his energies, and the two ex-churchwardens did all they could to look pleased with the result of their united efforts.

This, however, was by no means quite so easy a matter. For, after the feast comes the bill; and since some gentlemen had paid the debt of nature before paying their subscription to the church; and since others had been obliged to draw up certain schedules, which showed that they had, in a moment of church enthusiasm, promised their creditors' money instead of their own; and since a third class found just enough traces of Puseyism in the building to serve as an excuse for not paying "out of principle,"—Messrs. Challen and Burcham found their recent aggrandisement an expensive luxury.

This led to many sharp comments on the extravagance of builders, and the shifty conduct of certain members of their committee, who had had the presence of mind always to let Messrs. Challen and Burcham sign first, and not to be too ready to put their own names afterwards. And so it came about that, before this much-boasted church was presented for consecration, there was scarcely one of those one most forward in the cause who

had not been heard to say, it was the last church he would ever meddle with to his dying day.

This amused Tom Vicars greatly; so much so, that when they were debating about the day of consecration, Master Tom said, with much mock gravity, that he should strongly advise the least possible delay; for, certain public-spirited gentlemen seemed so truly penitent and sorry for what they had done, that he expected every day to see them make all the reparation in their power, and pull the offending edifice down again.

The consecration was a great event; chiefly, I believe, because it was understood that persons were to be admitted by tickets, and the Building Committee hugged their little patronage and privileges as closely for themselves and friends as other people. I may explain that an edifice is no church till it is consecrated, otherwise admission by tickets could not be allowed. The Gregsons and the Tinsons, and their friends up and down both sides of Pump Street, did not fail to beset our door, and could not understand that even the clergyman had but very few tickets at his disposal.

Mrs. Tinson asked Ellen how she was going to do about the baby; "for," she said, "those girls are not to be trusted. They will lock up the house, put the key under the door, run about in the crowd for hours, and leave an innocent baby to scream its little heart out. Ever since the Vincents' baby was burnt, people were being up to those girls a little better."

This advice, if quite unnecessary in our case, was very good. For, there are many young mothers who are not at all aware that ten pounds a-year, besides tea and sugar, will not surround their infant's cradle with all those guardian angels, in the form of maternal instincts and yearnings, by which alone Providence preserves the helpless little dears from being made pincushions in the day, or flattened and smothered in the night.

Mrs. Vine's womanly sympathies anticipated Ellen's difficulty. How could the youthful wife on such a day be absent from her husband's church? How could the tender mother trust a babe in Pump Street, and expect to find it alive, if she found any of it, when she came back? No, this should never be. Ellen must bring the baby to the Rectory, and leave it safely sleeping in her patent safety cot.

Now, any one would think a Consecration-day would be preceded and followed by days of unanimity and peace, with unruffled feelings, and all in unison with so holy an occasion. But, let me ask, what great event ever did or will pass off in this

selfish world without the family of Mr. Byends seeking "to turn it to their private account?"

The bone of contention happened to be this:—There was a churchyard to be consecrated as well as a church, and, if this were not prevented, the old churchyard—which even Mrs. Vine had declared was "a disgusting place," "a crying nuisance," and "they should never bury her there"—was in danger of being pronounced too full to hold any more. Tales were rife of every horror lately brought to light, and of bodies, not decomposed, being callously disturbed by the ruthless mattock. A respectable inhabitant once gave evidence that a certain grave was half full of water one day and empty the next, in consequence of the suction of Messrs. Malton's brewery pump hard by; and this, said Tom Vicars, fully and satisfactorily accounted for so much *body* in Messrs. Malton's beer!

But the world has changed little, except superficially, since St. Paul's day. Soon the cry was raised, if not "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" yet "Great are the rights and sacred the privileges of that heathen abomination, the old churchyard," and "the craftsmen, together with the workmen of like occupation," were soon called together and reminded,—"Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth." Just at that time it was treason to the Rectory to say a word against this vested nuisance. Old Dr. Dillon—who, after the prestige of being Mrs. Vine's own accoucheur, became by degrees the ever-present friend-at-need of all the embryo Church-and-States in the town of Lachford—he, at one unwary moment, let fall a word against the said churchyard, being bold enough to doubt the salubrity of earth reeking and clammy, with more putrescence than would pass away; and, unhappily, I quoted this high medical opinion, and soon was told in reply that the Doctor had better modify those notions, or else his tongue might prove a woful impediment to his teeth. Unhappily, about this time, somebody's kitchen wanted repair, and turning up the flagstones, which were rather ponderous, the curious cook deciphered "Sacred to the memory of," "Tribute of an affectionate wife," &c. Tom Vicars soon heard and published this joke, probably with embellishments. Tom Vicars was, as my reader will by this time have discovered, by far the best fun in all Lachford; and Tom said the most appropriate motto for a Lachford tombstone was "*Resurgam*"—"I shall rise again;" for old Bile, the sexton, took care to fulfil that prediction in a very short time. This affair of selling tombstones to pave the kitchens caused great scandal, though Tom said,

truly enough, if there were as many tombstones as there were bodies, future geologists would find vertical strata so compact and original as to puzzle them exceedingly to make out the proper series.

However, no abuse was ever yet so rank as to want defenders, and some said they never would have voted for the new church, if they had thought it would involve a new churchyard; and, up to the very day of consecration, proposals for a cemetery were made, and many other diversions were attempted, which kept part of Lachford in a very excited state.

The Rector's fees and sexton's perquisites were now so far endangered that the part I took on the other side did no little to widen the broad line which already separated the Parsonage House from Pump Street, as also to excite vexatious opposition to every scheme I proposed for the benefit of my new parish. For, I was not long in finding that people, high as well as low, are not at all above risking the happiness of the poor for no more worthy object than spiting the parson. But, though parsons like their own way as much as other men, I am proud to say that the spirit of the man within their breast often gives way to shield their poor and humble friends.

My church was consecrated on a Wednesday, and between that day and Sunday I had to provide clerk, sexton, and singers, mops and brooms, candles, coals, and many of the odds and ends of housekeeping which apply to a church. Singers, some would think, I might have dispensed with, considering the state of my funds; but the service without the change and variety of psalmody would, to the congregation, seem even longer than it is; and to the minister it would be beyond measure exhausting.

Ellen undertook to direct the cleaning of the church, and she certainly did keep it in a state of neatness and order that contrasted most favourably with the churches around. John Harrison was my sexton; he and his wife, who cleaned the church, did far more than they were ever paid for, and by their kind attention smoothed the rough and rugged path along which for seven years I was doomed to plod my weary way. "I would not allow any of those hassocks from the old church if I were you, sir," said Harrison, the first day. "Why not?" I asked. "Because, sir, they are full of fleas, all of them." This was true enough. Neither is anything more disgraceful than the fusty baize and ragged matting so common in churches.

The singers were a great trouble to me. Mr. Scrape, a second-rate music-master, undertook to furnish a choir at a low

rate. But I soon found that he calculated on having all his own way; and he only wanted the church as a place to advertise his quavers and shakes, and so attract pupils for music lessons.

Mr. Scrape was very proud of Miss Mary Valletty. She was quite his prima donna. Harrison said she was too fine by half,—"Poll Vallit" used to be her name, and she had better mind her shop. This Miss Valletty did give herself great airs, and with her professional affectation spoilt everything we sang. She was a very bold-looking girl, yet she actually asked for a curtain to screen the choir from the public gaze; for, she said, "It was really so very trying to be looked at." But I knew all they wanted was something to hide them while whispering to each other, and sucking lozenges—for a professional choir, in former days at least, was a very bad example to the congregation—so this I positively refused. However, troublesome as they were, it was three years before my parishioners would give me the means of replacing them.

The Apostles, we read, would not leave preaching the word "to serve tables," or, to keep charity accounts. But where the laity do not act the part of deacons and relieve us of duties secular and mechanical, no one knows how our time is wasted, nor—which is worse—how the pastoral tone and temper is ruffled and impaired. A Pastor should have nothing to withdraw his attention from his spiritual charge, or to divert his thoughts from meditating on the word of God. While visiting the sick and admonishing and teaching the ignorant, he should make observations for his sermons and decide on practical topics, and then he should have time for meditating on God's word, and for calm and quiet prayer and continued self-examination. For, the source of all a minister's power is personal piety and a yearning "that they may be saved." There is no eloquence without earnestness, and words to reach the heart of the hearer must come from the heart of the preacher too.

I speak from much experience when I say, that while a true pastor's life is one of prayer and preaching, all the secular details of parish business tend to break the train of holy thought, and dissipate his mind.

Nearly all the great preachers have had curates to assist in parish duties, and also a curate to read the prayers, and thus they have had the great advantage of entering the pulpit with thoughts collected, and energies unimpaired. Besides, they usually preach one sermon only, and all the powers of the week are collected as under high pressure for this single effort.

To preach effectively after reading the whole Liturgy is very difficult. Suppose that a speaker or a counsel had to read to the jury some pages of Blackstone for an hour before he made his speech: it would act as an opiate to his hearers and a damper to himself. All speaking would become dull and mechanical, and all attempt at impassioned eloquence would be at an end.

I can truly say, that from the day my church was opened, my energies (about the average) were overtasked. Every Sunday evening I was too tired to read or exert my mind in any way; and every Monday I was what we term "Mondayish," that is, my electricity seemed discharged and the battery required time to load again. I say nothing of the powers of mere soulless and mechanical readers of prayers and sermons, but any devout and earnest clergyman will testify that two full services in a large town church prove more exhausting than any other labour he has ever experienced. The reason is that, besides the excitement, loud reading tries the organs in a measured and unnatural way. In speaking, you can adapt your sentences to your organs; but in reading you strain those organs to suit the sentences. In the same way there is no fatigue in natural breathing; but try to breathe artificially with measured respiration, and you are soon tired.

If to the Sunday exhaustion we add the schools, the visiting, the charity collections, and one routine of petty parochial interruptions about the squabbling of the choir, pensioners' certificates to sign, parish pay to plead for, charity money to disburse or tickets to fill up, besides quarrels to settle, and subscriptions for dead pigs, or drawing up petitions for donkeys that ought to be superannuated, it will easily be understood that my nerves were continually on the fret, and my meditations as often interrupted; and as to my resolution to throw my whole mind into my sermons, and my whole heart into the delivery of them, there was far more than I had imagined to divert my mind and to damp the fire and ardour of the soul. Often have I wished for "seven men of good report" to relieve me, and that I could say with the Apostles, "But we will give ourselves *continually* to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

But such a blessed state of things it is in vain to hope for in our day. Let me warn you, candidates for the ministry, to be prepared to make the best of every difficulty. I felt I could never be too thankful for the mercy, that whereas my neighbour Frank Tinson served a set of men who were blind to what was good, and, perhaps, expected things impracticable, One only was

my Master, and One touched with a sense of my own infirmities, and while I did my best, He asked no more. Still, I confess it with shame, that sometimes I have done much less than I could have done, because thwarted in some boasted scheme which, after all, might have effected little good.

All that I would here enforce is, let the laity do what they can to relieve the clergy, and the way to induce the laity to do so is for the clergy manfully to help themselves. And as to preaching, so long as we do our best and have our heart in the cause, so long will our sermons be edifying, though less effective than we could wish.

I have now to say a little about the expenses of my new church, and its drain upon my income. But this deserves a chapter for itself.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE HISTORY OF MY NEWLY-FORMED PARISH, AND HOW WE GOT ON WITHOUT A CHURCH-RATE.

I HAVE already said, my new church in the town of Lachford was at last finished and quarrelled over—an answer to the devout prayers of some, and also to the jobbing machinations of others. Some greeted every stone laid on its rising spire as likely to improve the morals of the poor—others, as sure to improve the property of the rich. All bills were paid, a meeting held to audit the accounts, and the building was consecrated, and so made a church, with the usual processions before that solemn ceremony, and the usual good luncheons, and bad speeches after, wherein everybody complimented everybody else, and every one looked pleased with every one because every one was really pleased with himself.

One year passed away, but not without my being every week reminded that, even for the care of a church, nothing was to be had for nothing in this world; for, the candleman, the smith, the glazier, the man who sold the sacramental wine, the man who put on, with the help of long ladders, the tile blown off by the wind, the man who oiled the sun-blistered doors, the woman who cleaned the church, and the woman who washed the linen—all, all asked one question, namely, said the clerk, "Who was to be responsible?"

I answered, "We can't delay these necessary orders. I must speak to Mr. Wilson. He was the most active in building the church; and the Rector of the town is also interested in the poor, for whom this church was built. But meanwhile, I suppose, I must pay the wages; and the mops, the dusters, and the scrubbing-brushes must be put down to me. Pray how have the tradesmen booked them already, Harrison?"

"All down to you, sir. You remember that the man with the ladders spoke to you, sir."

"Spoke? Yes, he did happen to say something in passing."

"'In passing,' you call it, sir! Please, sir, he stopped awhile at the corner on purpose to fix that job on some one definite, sir."

"Indeed! And the others——?"

"Mops and all, sir—wine from Carter's—glazier and all have spoken to you, and booked to you, sir. Very shy about churchwardens' orders, they most all are; because, when Christmas comes, everybody sends on the bill to some one else."

"Now, I had already many demands on my small stipend, what with school, soup, and blanket and lying-in-linen clubs: and, seeing things won't order themselves, and things must be not only bought by, but sold and debited to some one, and since the clergy—though not considered men of business (business being a thing which clergymen are almost forbidden to practise)—very soon find out the debtor-and-creditor rules of it, I felt alarmed at having a positive church-repair and church-housekeeping account daily set down to me. Accordingly, I hurried away to consult the public-spirited Mr. Wilson.

Mr. Wilson was an old inhabitant of Lachford, whereas I had only come as a stranger into the place. He was much interested in the people from his factory and other local engagements, so I naturally looked to him to tell me how they intended their new church to be maintained.

This was quite a new idea to the man of business. "Repairs already!" he exclaimed. "What is money wanted for?" A short statement soon showed him that 25*l.* a-year was the least on which divine service could be decently conducted.

"Well, well," he said, "I see now. A clear account is always satisfactory. You must put this before our people at the proper time. I can't do much myself, having spent too much on the church already. A Repair Committee or a 'Stead-of-Church-Rate-Committee' would be the thing, not that I can work for you. Look at this heap of letters. And now, good morning."

This interview was so far from encouraging, that I next applied to our old Rector, Dr. Vine, an active man in his day, but one who, as some horsemen survive their nerve, so he his moral courage. He was one of those peaceable men who thread their way so softly through life as never to do any harm to any one. Very charming characters, certainly. The only drawback is, that such people are just as innocent of ever doing good to any one.

The silver-haired and silver-toned Doctor seated me cosily by the fire, and then put some coals on, heard my story, and went off

at a tangent with "the very same kind of perplexity that happened to myself forty years ago."

He talked of church-rates in the abstract. He scorned the idea that no one benefited by the church-rate but those who went to church; as well say no one benefited by the county-rate but those who went to gaol. Why, no one, he said, benefited more than the Dissenters themselves. What fun would there be in Dissent with no Church to abuse? The Dissenters, if once they lost the Church, would be like the quarrelsome woman who lost her husband, and pined and died for want of opposition.

In the middle of this discussion, Mr. Hoxton, the Radical bill-broker, came in, and our Rector tried at some more pithy sayings. But, he was only talking against time, to let my visit die a natural death. Well, he talked away with Mr. Hoxton, and said, among other things, "We all know, friend, that the Church of England is the poor man's church." "What?" said the Radical: "as well say that Leadenhall is the poor man's market! He may starve near one for lack of food, and starve near t'other for lack of knowledge, unless he can pay his way."

"But you'll admit," said the Doctor, "that the piety of our ancestors intended that the poor——" "Yes," replied Hoxton, "*intended*, I grant you. But look at your own church, Doctor—the rich have the best places, the poor are skulking out of ear-shot under the gallery, though few indeed are there at all."

"Well, but Mr. Hoxton," I remarked, "mine is the poor man's church—built for the poor. I am now come to inquire how we are to keep it up. A very trifle a-head would more than suffice, if——"

"You may well say *if*," he rejoined; "if you can find any one to collect that trifle. Did you ever hear of a kind of taxation which makes every halfpenny cost a penny for collecting?—I'll tell you what, young man; you, with this new church and no rate, remind me of a late story of a kind, fatherly sort of man, who was so green as to hold out his hands to take a baby for a young woman while stepping out of an omnibus. The young woman was off like a shot, and he had to keep the baby. Everybody cried, 'No child of mine!' So you are the gentleman who has this penniless church on your hands, and you are the gentleman who are likely to support it."

I now saw that both Mr. Hoxton and the Rector viewed my perplexity with that calm resignation which persons reserve especially for their neighbour's misfortunes. No assistance was offered me, and, after wasting the morning in this very unprofit-

able kind of parochial business (and a great many mornings may be wasted in the same way), and after disquieting my mind with sentiments, anything but pastoral, for the rest of the day, I tried to forget the subject, hoped for the best, and said things should take their course; and a very expensive course that proved to be. The year was soon closed, and my eyes were as quickly to be opened. What with repairing roof, throwing snow off ditto, man to clear pipes, hire of ladder for ditto, besides the mops and brooms before mentioned, I found that money paid and debited amounted to 31*l.* 9*s.* — no small deduction from a stipend of only 150*l.* a-year!

"And were the congregation so illiberal as to throw this expense upon their minister?"

There are some occasions — particularly where money is to be paid — on which every one waits for some one else to move first. Add to this, while we are all so taken up with our own liabilities, many days may pass before it comes to our neighbour's turn to be thought of at all, — "No," we say, "it is time enough to pay money when you are asked for it." So, at last, I made one or two calls, and talked of the church, and its want of a rate, and gave hints, but all to no purpose. Some said, they could not ask any one for money on any account: while others thought to be called on for money was "quite horrid:" so at last, I gave out a notice in church (at which I could see people touch and look at each other), and called a vestry meeting.

Meanwhile I prepared a very ingenious statement, "to be clear to the meanest understanding," and devised plans for swallowing the dose in quantities so homœopathic that no one should taste it, and explaining, most speciously, that with 2000 souls it would be only so much a-head, and with 500 houses only so much a family.

When a man's mind is full of anything, his friends are apt to scent his little weakness, and facetiously draw him out. I could not dine out, but my financial measures were discussed with a degree of mock-seriousness, as if I were Chancellor of the Exchequer. In short, you would hardly believe it, but my "thirty-one pound nine," for church mops and scrubbing-brushes, had become quite a joke in the neighbourhood.

When Tuesday came, dong, dong, dong! went the church-bell, and I was early in the vestry. My table had a business air, with pens and ink, and ruled foolscap. I stood saying my speech over to myself, and working myself up into a suitable frame of mind, but

— no one came. — Dong, dong! went the bell; the time appointed had passed, but "the more we kept on calling the more they kept on not coming." At last, two decent tradesmen entered: and after that Harrison, my sexton, came with two neighbours. He was a good-natured fellow, and had been after these men, and, as I heard, treated them with some beer just to come and save appearances; "he did feel so for master's disappointment." — The result was a resolution, made by *me*, moved by *me*, and seconded by *me* in reality, though others lent their names, "That a committee of three be formed to collect from house to house."

Of course *I* was the committee for begging, though two tradesmen supported me by their presence. One carried a red-covered book (a single page would have held all the names), the other a brown-holland bag, which preserved no little of its loose and flabby appearance to the end of the day. However, my colleagues knew the people very well, — knew whom to ask, and served, like keepers when we are trout-fishing, to point out the likely places.

One was rather discouraging: He said, "Two other begging stories had been round the parish lately — your subscription, sir, should have been before them — Jenkins's, the dairyman's, cow died, that was one collection; then the Vincents lost a deal of property when their child was burnt. Now, your story is not touching at all — most people, especially mothers, will give something for a burnt baby, but as to church-pews, tiles or gutters, nobody feels much for them." "Never mind," said the other, "we must do our best to get our minister out of difficulties. Stay — here's Burcham, the schoolmaster: he is very sore about the building expenses; still he charges me five shillings a-year for my boy's church-sitting. He can't have the face to refuse me." So saying, he knocked at Mr. Burcham's door.

Mr. Burcham was a tall, thin, perpendicular man, of vacant countenance: the boys (always apt at nicknames) called him "The Long Vacation." This important gentleman received us well enough, and honestly calculated his twenty boarders at so much a-head, and gave us five pounds, and had a long talk in the way of discount. This is common in collecting money. The more a man gives you, the longer you must expect him to talk about it. Then we missed some houses; "nothing to be had here," I was told: "offended because the church wasn't built in their damp field." Next, three or four decent people gave us a crown each, and after that I was advised to miss some more houses.

"No. 10 is a sad fellow; No. 11 subscribes for nothing; No. 12 will give us more impudence than he's worth. But — here is No. 13, Mrs. Clarke, she is sure to give something."

"Stay," said I, "allow me to pass Mrs. Clarke's door — she is ruined by doctors and doctors' stuff." The truth was, I visited the good woman so frequently, that she felt a personal obligation to me; so, to ask would be to demand. In such cases no clergyman can find it in his heart to apply. The charm is, "We want not yours, but you;" and who would sink the disinterested pastor in the grinding tax-gatherer?"

In all these trials of ministerial feelings, and of an independent spirit, four or five hours passed away. Here was an experiment of "a voluntary church-rate," as we intended to call it! There was, indeed, little enough of the voluntary in the matter. Nine out of ten either gave grudgingly or not at all. Mr. Black refused flatly, because he did not want a new church. Mrs. White refused "out of a proper spirit," because if the stingy old Gripham next street flattered himself that honest people were going to pay their own share and his too, she would show him that he was mistaken."—What was most annoying to me was that, of those who contributed, many who gave reluctantly made it a personal favour, and some who gave generously alluded so touchingly to recent sickness or distress, that I wished I had never applied to them at all.

This was the discouraging way in which my first collection passed off. As regards my parish, it was a day wasted, and worse than wasted, for it impaired my influence ever after. It made one half my congregation shy of me, from a shabby conscience, while the other half associated my visits with gas-rates, poors'-rates, and water-rates. The spell was broken, and my pastoral confidence destroyed. A hard debtor-and-creditor account was opened between us, and my dignity no little lowered.

After all this sad wear and tear of my sensibilities as a clergyman and a gentleman, 18*l.* out of 31*l.* 9*s.* was all I had collected. Ellen advised me to spare myself, and send the clerk; as indeed I did to one street; but he came back with a sorry half-crown, and assured us that "where there was no shame at refusing there were no pence to be squeezed out." Then, after wasting week-days, I was persuaded to spoil a Sunday by a "sermon to be preached, and collection made." This produced six pounds more; and even of this, two personal friends of my own gave two sovereigns! More disheartening still. By that time I had become as sick of

the collections, as my parishioners did not scruple to say that they were,—so I put up with the loss of the balance.

This loss, however, was by no means my only one. Every subscriber came to me, as if he could claim contributions in return for any absurd scheme he had taken up. Shortly after came on the annual collections for my school and soup and blanket-fund. Here also were "arrears due to treasurer," of course myself. Some now gave less, and some nothing, because they subscribed to the Church Fund, "which some of the school subscribers," whose names I cited as an example, "did not." The result was that my church collection did little else than rob my other funds, and leave a larger balance to the debit of the poor parson! For, so long as a clergyman becomes responsible for any adverse balance in schools or other parochial charities, so long will any new gathering, as for church repairs, come directly or indirectly from his own pocket. To allow his church and its arrangements to fall into disorder, would sacrifice all that honest pride and interest in his parish, without which the usual stipend would be in effect even far more inadequate than it is already.

When anything has proved unsuccessful, there are always persons to tell you how much better they could have done it for you. The art of collecting, I found, was quite a study with some people. "You should have had a larger committee, some of all classes. The small tradesmen are ashamed to say No to each other, but easily make excuses to you. Then, for the small gentry, those who stand shivering on the cold margin of gentility, as also for thriving tradesmen, let two or three of your *élite* set stand in imposing and expansive dignity before them, and they hardly *dare* refuse you!"

So far are collections *voluntary*, and such is the morality of a voluntary system. Who hasn't known the case of some poor gentleman's widow, so overpowered by the august presence of a deputation, that courtesy gave what justice to her family would deny.

I had fully made up my mind to submit to these indignities no more. So, when the time for the annual collection came round, I simply called on those who had promised a stated sum, and sent the sexton to take his chance—always a very bad chance—with a few more. The consequence was, that every year the balance was more and more against me. One or two little people told my sexton, that if the minister would pay them the compliment to come himself they would subscribe, not otherwise. In other

words, they would pay a clergyman, like a lackey, half-a-crown for waiting upon them.

In course of time the cholera broke out in my new parish, and I was so bold as to take the part of poor tenants, who pined and died over drains and cesspools, against that set of small landlords who buy up the worst of houses, let out these pest-houses and rats' castles to the poor, and live by grinding out the cruel problem of how to extort for the minimum of decency the maximum of pay. No man knew the town or the tone and temper of the people better than my sexton, John Harrison. He knew the little world of Lachford, the conflicting and interlacing interests of the people, and could descry three or four strong motives in one direction, where I could only see one weak one in another.

The pleasure of doing good, especially if a clergyman defends his poor parishioners, is a luxury for which he must expect to pay. Cottage-owners—hovel-owners, I should say—claim a vested interest in fever-dens and nuisances, and feel as uneasy as the very rats and vermin themselves at any indication of a change. I often talked to Harrison about my plans for delivering the poor creatures from all the abominations of drains leaking into wells, and all the active elements of typhus. I used to dwell on the extraordinary coincidence of there being, out of the sixteen cases of cholera, not one single case in which the avenging fiend was not, as it were, tempted to descend by the fetid exhalation of filth, from which even brutes turn away.

"This is all very good of you, sir," said Harrison; "but how about your church collection? All Lachford is linked together; landlords and tenants, brewers and publicans, make common cause. If you cross their interests, and offend one, you will soon find you have offended all."

This proved too true. The more I took the part of the poor, the fewer subscribers to the church! Tradesmen dropped off because I didn't deal with them; half-and-half genteel people declined because my wife didn't call on them; for, the clergyman, like the doctor, is often expected to serve as a crutch to help little people within the pale of that society to which they are always ambitious to belong.

By the end of my seventh year in Lachford, more than half the church repairs had fallen on me. One day Harrison said, "You remember Mrs. Williams, sir, who joined the Methodies? She couldn't afford us five shillings a-year: but she pays ten shillings a-quarter now.

"Indeed! But can you tell me how it is they pay so much to the Dissenters, and we collect so little?"

"Quite another thing, sir. They squeeze and we don't. Exclusive dealing is worth paying for. Then, there's the opposition and the pride of the thing. See how even a stingy man will pay money for a lawsuit—people that won't pay for pleasure will pay for spite. Only the good sort of people pay to us; the bad and designing, as well as good, pay to them. Add to this, they pay for their party, and standing, and tea-gatherings, and to feel they are somebody. So you see, sir, they get so much for their money in chapels; and in churches, besides sermons and prayers, they get nothing at all. Don't you remember, sir, that where you didn't deal and didn't visit, our church people didn't pay?"

CHAPTER XV.

THE CLOUDS GROW DARKER—I TRY FOR A GAOL CHAPLAINCY—A TRYING SCENE—MY HEALTH FAILS—AN ALARM, AND WHAT CAME OF IT.

AFTER seeing the result of my church collection, my troubles were evidently on the increase, and unhappily the distractions of my position, and the exhausting influences of my labours both at home and in my parish, I was conscious, did much to impair my usefulness as a minister.

This was a sad reflection: for, before I married, I said I felt too "unsettled" for my office, and now I was actually too distracted! My life was one wearying struggle to make both ends meet. In every other profession it is a maxim, that without an easy mind and good pay it is in vain to expect good work; but as to the pastor, few persons are aware that you starve the ministry when you starve the man. However, as one advantage, there was enough in my daily lot to wean me from the world, and Ellen remarked that she never could have supposed that she should ever have lived to dwell so feelingly on the simple petition, "Give us this day our daily bread."

By degrees we became resigned, but not all at once. For some time we harped and hankered after what, as we said, we were born to, and we thought the world had not used us well: though now I see that we had not used the world very well: for, if every one were to marry, as we did, on nothing more substantial than love and expectations, the said world must certainly be filled one half with paupers and the other half with parish officers. Still, resigned we did become at last, and religion became our comfort and support in every trial. Indeed, we both grew old very fast in character. If every year in man's life opens more and more of the scheme of Providence, in our lives one year unfolded as much as ten. We now saw the drama of life by broad daylight. In genteel life we had lived, like other people, in an artificial atmosphere of conventional insincerity, and we found it very im-

proving to live without it. For, as to flattery, we were not worth it, and perhaps there is nothing of which poor people have so little.—"The deceitfulness of riches" and the false friends of this world, you would say, I ought to have known before, having so often preached it to others; but, for all that, I wanted adversity to preach it to me.

I do not mean to excuse my thoughtlessness; but there is something in the buoyant spirits and intense enjoyment of happy youth which acts like "the veil over the heart." We are apt to fix our gaze on things without too abstractedly to turn our eyes within. This veil soon began to drop off after we were once in Pump Street: though for some time we looked, as it were, naturally for the kind attentions of old. Trifling presents of fruit or flowers in summer would now have been doubly acceptable. Indeed, till we lived in town lodgings, we did not know the intense gratification of a nosegay, with all its associations with green fields and the sunshine of early days.

Presents of game used to come as regularly as the shooting season; but now, save my dear mother's basket, all was stopped; though anything for a change, to say nothing of the economy, would have been far more than a compliment in our humble state. But few people feel much interest in showing their taste in putting pretty bouquets in pretty papers, to be sent with such a direction as "Pump Street." Hares and pheasants are creatures of aristocratic breed, which after their patrician woods would quite disdain so low and mean a destination. And so, even the little accidents of gentility one by one dropped off. Our table had no scented notes—no basket of cards: not a scrap, but a plain kind of "post letters," was to be seen. We had no friends to direct notes very often, still less to pay visits.

Our neighbourhood, it is evident, was a very unfashionable one. The gaol was close by, and "going to Pump Street" had a very felonious sound, and a very strong personal allusion, among the common people at Lachford. We talked much to each other about friends being like swallows, disporting in the summer of our fortunes, but flying before the frost and snows. But, "Where is the satisfaction of sending luxuries to those who want the necessaries of life? We cannot alter their position, and it is hard to pay attentions that may not be misunderstood."—This is the way we are apt to reason: and the "nearest relations" keep furthest off, for fear they should be asked for anything. But, whether or not, we are sure to find, as Burns says, that "poverty parts good company," and we

seemed now in every respect given over to our fate, just as if poverty were an offence against all good society, and as if we were deservedly sent to Coventry, and could not be countenanced in such low conduct and ungenteel behaviour.

I now never saw poverty and sickness in a cottage but I did indeed realise the trial, and pitied the poor sufferers from the very bottom of my heart, and returned home much richer and more contented with my lot. Not that I was quite contented, for I was poor indeed, sighing not at all for luxuries, but literally for fresh air and things necessary for health and strength.

The alms of the congregation were always at my disposal; otherwise, I could scarcely have endured the sight of some of the more wretched in our lanes and alleys. All ambition, all thought of self—so hard to forget while in prosperity—soon passed away; and it came so easy and natural to me to make common cause with my poor people, that my heartfelt sympathy could not fail to add a winning influence to my words.

The effect of my household cares and family anxieties was really very curious to consider. I am not boasting of being good, but I must declare, that at the time of life of which I am speaking —from my twenty-sixth to my thirty-third year,—a comfortable rectory, sleek cows in the glebe, and a good account of tithes, would never have brought either of us to that subdued and knowing-when-we-are-well-off-kind of feeling which we now enjoy.

Still, all the distractions of my early struggles, if they increased my faith, did most seriously damp my energies and undermine my strength. Extempore addresses I found very difficult: for, I had no freshness of mind nor power to rally and control my truant thoughts. Day after day, up and down the narrow lanes and alleys, was my beat: and every month I found that more resolution was required, because my spirits and my strength were less. I had a fair average congregation, but they were not the poor and ignorant for whom the church was built. The only thing which would have roused and drawn forth from their Sunday lethargy the hard-worked mechanics and factory-people, was a degree of power and energy which it was impossible to command.

Without seeking any excuse, I truly believe that the exhaustion of a sole charge in a large parish gradually crushes all that is noble or inspiring in the minister, and leaves little but the mere animal machinery with which to work. Still, the fact that the church was built for the poor—I mean for the ragged and unreclaimed, and for those who required the first principles of

the Gospel—and the fact that, save some who came from curiosity, and a few who had an eye to the alms, the very poor hardly ever came—this did, indeed, trouble me.

The first thing that occurred to make me reflect on the unsuitableness of my church and its services for this truly pitiable class of the community was, that a charity bazaar was established in Lachford, and made exceedingly attractive to the poor. Still, only one or two dropped in; and they seemed to feel out of their element in the presence of ladies and gentlemen, and soon went out again. A little inquiry showed me that, though the poor were much disappointed at losing the sight of all the pretty things and decorations, still, when they found that they could not have the room to themselves, they felt the chill of exclusiveness, and preferred staying away.

This seemed too much like the case of my church. Soon after, I read the observation of a member of the City Mission:—Many of the poor will assemble with those of their own state of ignorance and raggedness for divine worship in a room, who would not enter a church; though perhaps the next generation, the children of such persons, may prove regular attendants at divine worship.

In this state of mind I went to consult a worthy man, from whom I had often derived much information about the habits of the poor.

Mr. John Tallen was a conscientious Dissenter in one sense. He had been born a Wesleyan, and the same conscience kept him to his chapel that keeps us to our church—for, ninety-nine men out of a hundred go by their conscience, just as they go by the church clock, without questioning the correctness of either. Mr. Tallen was a chemist. He mixed up pills and doses week-days, and had his little turn in a kind of hedge-chapel on Sundays. He was an excellent man in his way. He responded at our mayor's dinners to the toast of "The clergy of all denominations," and would vindicate his liberality by throwing in a half-crown to a church collection.

Mr. Tallen and I were good friends. My course was to say to the Dissenters, "Gentlemen, you know my principles: if you would co-operate with me, so much the better. If you only sow the seed where I cannot sow it—well; but pray, don't root up my crop to plant yours. Three clergymen, and one of them superannuated, I know, can augur but a sorry harvest among 6000 souls. Therefore, what you do, do heartily for the honour of God, and not, as I am afraid some do, from mere opposition to man."—

So, I didn't ignore the Dissenters; but I did what was right in my eyes and left them to do the same.

This, however reasonable, was not a very common practice in years gone by; but it answered admirably. The Dissenters of the parish of W. B. lent my friend B. a building while his school was under repair, while, for myself, Mr. Tallen painted a church for bare cost of materials.

"Where were you, yesterday?" I asked, one Monday, of Mr. Tallen, whom I found in his shop, pestle in hand.

"Poaching!" he replied humorously: "but it has been poaching where the sound of your guns isn't often heard. A sort of birds you can't get into your nets. You've heard of Hedge Schools and Ragged Schools: why should we not adopt Hedge Chapels and Ragged Chapels?"

"But what I am come to talk about is this new chapel of Jonists or Brownists: it is erecting so near you, that it seems some one is poaching on your manor, too."

"Exactly so, sir. That is just what I was saying. These people are firing away where our guns wouldn't be heard. Their game is a species of birds that we can't get into our net. Their congregations are Dissenters from Dissenters, and I hope one day to see Dissenters from them again, and I don't care how near us they may be either."

"Well, but what does it all mean?"

"Then, sir, I will explain: but you will allow me to employ rather an original kind of illustration. You know the round pond with the little island in it in Sir Alfred Burnett's park. I was recreating with my 'leading article'—so I call my wife—and children, and a bit of a pic-nic, in the keeper's lodge last summer, when sauntering with Mr. Brigham, the Scotch gardener, by that pond, I espied some green twisted osiers, like a dog-kennel, and asked Mr. Gardener what new dodge that was?"

"'Why, mon,' said Sandie, 'I intended it for the dooks to go into, but they never will. I am afraid it isn't dooks' nature.'—I immediately thought of your new church. You 'intended it for the *poor* to go into,' but they never will. 'I am afraid it isn't the *poor's* nature.' What can you say to that, sir?"

"Come—but the poor, that is, the ragged and the ignorant, do not go into your West Street Chapel either!"

"No, sir, but we are wiser than Sandie—we never supposed they would: we knew it was not 'dooks' nature.' There are certain social lines between which our people range. Above those lines they go to the church. How many of our chapels do

you find at the West End of London? Below those lines they go neither to your church nor to our chapel. No service suited to decent and intelligent people can possibly suit them, any more than if they were in New Zealand."

"And this new chapel?"

"This chapel is to us what our chapels are to you. It will attract chiefly those who would else go nowhere."

Mr. Tallen then proceeded to explain, that the Dissenters could rarely hope to command talent to suit the middle and the lowest class alike: but that some rough, loud-voiced, vulgar man in the tea-and-sugar line, who would disgust respectable tradesmen, had lately collected a congregation of outcasts, who would keep each other in countenance as to ragged apparel, and respond to wild and impassioned declamation, and buy his soap and candles in return. "So John Wakam," said Mr. Tallen, "serves to break up the fallows and prepare the way for better doctrine and better taste. But you, gentlemen of the Church, are like Sandie —you don't study 'dooks' nature.' Whereas we Dissenters accommodate our places to the habits of the creature."

"No," I replied. "It is not you who accommodate. You go on the free-trade principle, which in religion, as in other matters, is self-adjusting. But, if you Dissenters would only go hand in hand and act with us, what order, what ——"

"Yes, sir, *if*, *if*,—though then we should not be Dissenters any longer; and who would pay our ministers, without our own party and *esprit de corps*, I cannot tell. But I do so admire your *if*, sir.—*If* a lot of wriggling eels would only lie straight in a basket, what order! How easy to count them, to show them off, and the like! Well, just cut them across the back of the head, and stop all power and vitality, and you can have your own way. So it is with that slippery, refractory animal, called man. No, no. So long as there is any life and energy in people, Sam Slick would tell you 'tisn't human natur to expect sich a thing.' Man is a queer chemical compound—nine parts nonsense to one part sense. His self-will, prejudice, fancy, and caprice, are as much part and parcel of a man as skin, bone, and gristle are of butchers' meat. But more of this another day."

Dr. Sackville, a physician of much ability, and ready, as doctors very commonly are, to give advice to those who cannot afford to pay, took much interest in our company. His house was about a mile distant, on Harbury Hill; and to the fresh air and diversion for ourselves and children, which we there enjoyed, I am sure we owed our lives. Indeed, that good man has admitted

since, that we were pining for want of light and oxygen, and that to invite us to his healthful, happy home, and to a walk in his garden, was like administering the elixir of life.

Dr. Sackville was eminent for nervous complaints, and the advice he gave me I do most emphatically recommend to all young clergymen. Exercise, he said, is Nature's counter-irritant; therefore it is that men under strong excitement pace up and down the room, and madmen are never still. Again, the fresh morning air, laden with oxygen, is indispensable. This gives colour to your cheeks: whereas, a long morning in a close room as certainly pales the countenance and clouds the brain. Add to this, some change and variety by company, or by field sports, or something that diverts the mind while it exercises the limbs, is essential to a healthy brain. He said it *was very cruel of society, and contrary to nature*, to discourage fishing, and cricket, and lively parties in young clergymen; for such diversions were essential to a *sound brain*, and the want of them made men fanciful, and was the cause of many of the queer ways and actions for which the clergy are especially remarkable. Persons who live alone, or in one routine of monotonous habits, all become nervous and "crotchety."—"If you want society, you should not go exclusively among your brother clergy. Fancy a grocer eating figs for a change! Ideas deteriorate as fast as anything from breeding in and in. Thus the clergy condemn themselves to one class of facts and a dreamy state of mind."

After these hints, the Doctor conversed about my family circle, and ended by strongly urging that I would send my wife home to her relatives once or twice a-year. Soon after her father came to see her, and I took care to place my friend in his way. This was the beginning of her periodical visits to Bowdon, which proved much to the benefit both of her health and finances. First of all, travelling expenses were offered; then Alice became a favourite, and the shabbier she went the smarter she came back. Mrs. Horley also began to sympathise with Ellen. Like others of her sex, the step-mother had no want of lovingkindness when neither temper nor jealousy was in the way; and now the supposed depreciating daughter-in-law was merged in the courteous and attentive visitor. Still, no regular allowance was offered by the father. There is a very common kind of family charity, reminding us of the the New Poor-law: they will take young people into the house, but never allow any out-door relief.

About our fourth year at Lachford, it was announced that a chaplain was wanted for Lachford Gaol. The old chaplain had

only been paid 60*l.* a-year, consequently, to make up an income, he had served as chaplain to the Union at 30*l.* a-year. But since this only made 90*l.* he also took occasional duty. I have known him perform, when his rector was ill, five full services in one day. He has officiated at eleven, three, and six o'clock, in our very large and laborious town church, having previously officiated at eight o'clock at the Union, and at half-past one o'clock at the Gaol. He was a man of a full, fine voice, of great strength, and "famous wind," as had been often proved in his college racing-boat. But nature at last gave way. His nervous system was shaken, and palpitation of the heart one day stopped him in the service. However, he took some brandy as a stimulus, and tried to preach the sermon, but all in vain.

Dr. Sackville said, in a way that I felt intended as a kind hint to me, "Harrison must have perfect rest, and not even the thought of any work passing through his mind, for two years to come." But I said, "He cannot afford to be idle; he must exert himself. What can he do?"

"The truth is," answered the Doctor, "Harrison is a bankrupt—I mean, in point of health. He has been living on the capital of his strength instead of the daily supplies: and, see the result! Many a man does this in my profession, and in other kinds of business; and though we all pay the penalty in the same way, we are not likely to come to so sudden a stop as a clergyman. Any man can rise from a sick bed to visit a patient, or to advise a client, but not to stand in one position for an hour, and to try heart, and lungs, and brain, all at the same time, in reading the Service."

This sounded to me very ominous.

Harrison shortly after came to apprise me that he had arranged with his relations to leave Lachford; also, that the magistrates would now carry out their intention of securing the entire services of a clergyman at 300*l.* a-year and a house adjoining the Gaol.

I was immediately anxious to apply for this chaplaincy; but how could I propose it to Ellen?—The idea was so repulsive, to reflect that I had taken a lady from Bowdon Hall to live almost in Lachford Gaol!

However, it was not long before Ellen herself remarked that the appointment was very desirable. Poor, dear creature! she had now come to a state of mind to call anything desirable; because, want of money, with an increasing family to feed, clothe, and put to school, is a stern reality that makes any matter of

mere taste and inclination seem fanciful indeed. Just then I read, as an advertisement, in the "Times," "Wanted, an insane lady to take care of;" and I said to Ellen, "We can understand that now. If this wretched advertiser does not encumber herself with a lunatic, perhaps she is ready to go mad herself."

Next day I provided myself with a list of the county magistrates, and set about collecting testimonials. One letter did really seem satirical, for it ran thus:—"And for these reasons I conscientiously believe that the Rev. Henry Austin is in every respect a fit and proper person for Lachford Gaol."

This gaol duty was by no means light: the chaplain was required to enter all visits in a book, and to record, in effect, that he had endured never less than four hours' imprisonment every day of his life! Still there was no want of candidates. One county magistrate, who sent me a testimonial, wrote, "You are the fourth gentleman who has asked me to send him to gaol." Of course the testimonials were more or less complimentary, according, not to the merits of the candidates, but to the style of the writers. Some were evidently written out of vanity, to be read with a flourish on the day of election.

Ellen took all the highflown superlatives as facts, and I believe that I was weak enough to like them rather than otherwise; and one night, after tying them up with a piece of green ribbon, we went to bed so sanguine, as to be really happy in my prospect of success: but—all in vain! I really do not believe, judging from the creases in the paper, that they were ever opened at all. Ellen said she was sure they never were: and, she "only wish she had been up to their tricks; for she would have put a stitch or a wafer to try."

The choice was evidently made before the election was announced, and the advertisements were a sham to keep up appearances. The chaplain-elect was John Day. Now, all Lachford knew John Day, and though he was a good-natured fellow, he was most unfit for any such appointment, and the choice was regarded as an imposition on the rate-payers. It soon came out that the whole thing was a piece of county jobbery. For, John Day had married old Attwell's daughter, with a certain allowance, to cease as soon as he had preferment.

"A nice man is Mr. Attwell, forsooth," wrote the opposition editor, "to talk of jobbery!—Who planned the gaol-chaplain job? Who changed the salary from 60*l.* a-year to 300*l.*?—Why, we could mention a gentleman who did all this, as a genteel way of keeping his own daughter out of the county-rate!"

"I heartily wish," said Ellen, "we had never given the subject a thought; for, I now feel far poorer even than before. These dingy walls seem closer and more odious than ever, because no longer cheered by one ray of hope. Before, I was contented and resigned; but now that I have allowed myself to contemplate escape, I find it so hard to shut my eyes again, opened as they have been — Oh, how foolish! how wrong of me! — to the length, and depth, and breadth of our misery. It is not for myself, for I can bear it all; but to reflect that these dear children may even live to endure the same is painful, indeed! It is easy to talk of going out in the world; but little did I think, to one who is poor, what a very hard world this is!"

I am ashamed to confess how severe was this trial. The worst part of all was, it robbed me of all heart and hope, and all that warm glow of sanguine feeling, which gilds and cheers the rough journey of life. But now all was disenchanted. We scarcely spoke to each other for two days: the present was too distasteful to talk of: and as to the future, Ellen entreated me never to propose to her any such fruitless endeavour again.

This will give some idea of the way we passed six years of poverty, and labour too: in the course of which three more children were born, and the money in reserve—increased from time to time by some ten-pound notes from my dear mother's little, very little pin-money, sent as a present to the baby, or to pay nurse and doctor—was all but gone.

It is easy to suppose that the increase to our family added most painfully to the toil and fatigues of both of us. Many a fine morning have I gone out early with a child in my arms — many a night have I been hushing and trying to quiet the baby, when my fretted nerves and throbbing brain alike claimed repose — and many a time has my very heart ached to see the poor mother, hardly recovered from her confinement, sinking under the burthen of her infant, because afraid to trust the fagged and weary maid-of-all-work, or the cheap girl who gave her services for her victuals,—a very small quantity of the one for a very large quantity of the other.

All this time we were never free from anxiety as to the result of my father's speculations. Though my aunt's legacy had relieved him once, I heard so often of Mr. Meadows' visits, that I was painfully suspicious a cloud was bursting in that quarter. Indeed, considering what a kind old gentleman Mr. Meadows was, I could hardly have supposed that the name of Meadows could ever come to sound, as it did, so ominous in my ears.

And now my own health began to fail, and Dr. Sackville's frequent remarks about my excessive labour and anxiety, as tending to undermine my health, were all directed to the same point. Still, I could not realise his cautions, because my life was one state of excitement.

Wonderful is the connexion of the mind and body. If you overtask the brain, you spoil the digestion, and cause too small a supply of blood to the brain.

All this I began to experience. The doctor saw the blow was coming; but I was too excited to attend to symptoms—I said that I must not fancy such things: I could not afford to be ill, and had really no time to think about my health. Strange reasoning this will seem, no doubt; but, notwithstanding, it is the practice with a great many. However, the same exhausting and dangerous causes, far from ceasing, were daily becoming more active, and were sapping the very life within me.

My dear wife's health now required far more than periodical visits to her father's house, and such slight diversions, to support it. Stimulants, I was advised, and the most nourishing food, were now indispensable; and her appetite was delicate, and required an expensive kind of diet: for, the cooking of our maid was bad indeed, and Ellen could no longer superintend it!—But what rendered the case more hopeless was, that the fond and anxious creature lost all relish and heartiness at her meals, from dread of expense. The wine and porter she would sip, with a painful glance at what remained in the bottle; and the thought of the morrow would spare the chicken or the jelly intended for the day.

I said that the County Gaol was not far from Pump Street. In the fifth year of our banishment to that ill-omened neighbourhood, a murder was committed so revolting as to shock the whole country round. The murderer was apprehended in a low house in my parish. His victim, an innocent and much-beloved young woman, living a few miles off from Lachford, had given no other kind of provocation than the possession of some few shillings, and, I blush to say it, some little maiden charms. She lived long enough to tell by a shudder the identity of her destroyer, standing between the mayor and his officers by her dying bed; and then, said her old grandmother, on the trial—"Her was quite sensible, for her chuz (chose) her bearers, her sung a hymn, and then her died. And 'twas a mercy, too, sarved as she had been."

An execution, under such circumstances, was sure to draw spectators from all parts of the county; and you may imagine how I congratulated myself on not being chaplain at such a time as this. Ellen looked upon our failure now as quite a providential denial of a foolish wish. John Day often dropped in, and excited us much with painful details.

I thought, at one time, of sending Ellen to the Sackvilles on the day of execution; but our obligations were already too great, and I allowed myself to think our house was far enough from the horrid scene. But when the day came I was doomed to find out my mistake. Ten o'clock was the hour of execution. At five in the morning the crowd began to assemble. Pump Street, being the principal and the widest street in that neighbourhood, was the thoroughfare for gigs and waggons, with crowded seats like Hampton vans, with tax-carts and vehicles of every make-shift description. People poured down in crowds, white with the dust of many a travelled mile. The place was like a fair: last dying speeches of every recent murder were bawled about up and down before our house, including the last speech of "this most horrible and blood-thirsty malefactor." Coffee-stalls were set up for refreshment, and beer-cans clanked with revolting discord in our ears. Ellen soon felt her dreadful position, but it was now too late: she was afraid to leave the house, finding a difficulty with the children, but she became every hour more and more intensely excited.

The rumbling of wheels, the tramp of hurried feet, and the cries and sounds that met her ear, brought the horror more and more vividly to her mind, till at length it came with an agonising reality to her affrighted senses. She could almost see the chaplain—and deeply did she feel for John Day—at these last sad moments of a chaplain's duty. Her imagination could almost "body forth" the criminal trembling at the yells of the indignant rabble. "Never mind, my dear," I said; "this crowd will soon disperse. All will soon be quiet—the hour is all but come."

The clock struck ten. She breathed hard; looked like marble; and then sank swooning into my arms.

Poor thing! She had no health or spirits to spare for such unnecessary trials; and much did I reproach myself. This event made our residence more distasteful than ever. Some, I know, will say, that religion should have been our solace. Well, so it was. Religion alone made all this supportable. But refinement, taste, and all the habits of our birth and education, are blessings

that have this countervailing evil—they pare our sensibilities to the quick, and make us exquisitely alive to pain.

I am well aware that there was enough pride,—enough of the living-quite-under-a-mistake character in both of us, to require this fiery trial to cauterise and burn it out; but moral reflections do not often occur till we have in some way got over the smart of the rod.

I now became acutely wretched: I found myself often in tears, and accused myself of weakness and childishness: but I know now that this was only one sign of overwrought nerves. I did not like to meet Dr. Sackville: for, his look was every day more and more searching, as if my face were a dial on which he could read the hours and minutes to my complete prostration.

One day, in the morning service, near the end of the second lesson—that is the trying time with clergymen, if at all indisposed—I felt such giddiness that I threw up my chin, I changed my position, and made all the exertion I could in a narrow compass to prevent stopping altogether. However, the sensation passed off for the time, though this was a beginning of an end to me. From that time my strength sensibly declined; Dr. Sackville heard from Harrison, my sexton, that something was wrong, and advised morning air and exercise, with a tonic, rubbing, and cold ablutions.

At the same time he urged me to make interest among my friends for some other benefice: for, in the nature of things, this exhausting labour could not last long. I told him that the death of parents on my side as on my wife's would quite alter our position. "If so," said he, "you must anticipate part of your expectations by selling some reversion, for otherwise it will come too late to do you much service."

However, the idea served to divert and amuse my mind for awhile, and so far did good; for, a ray of hope comes like sunshine to cheer the sorrow-clouded mind.

Week after week passed by, and great was my difficulty to hide the sad truth from Ellen; for, I saw her look at times most inquiringly and most piteously at me. And now the remarks of people out-of-doors were very trying. Every one who met me said how ill my wife was looking; and every one who met Ellen said how ill her husband was looking; and some remarked, how ill we both were looking: but "with such a parish and Pump Street, what could any reasonable people expect?"

We have often heard of the Voice of conscience, of a Voice from within, a Voice from without, and even a Voice from the

tomb, and all kinds of Voices; but the most admonitory and the most soul-stirring Voice of all is—the Voice from the cradle. How often have the quarrelsome, ill-matched pair, felt reproved and brought back to sober reason by the crowing of their common offspring! How often has the worn-out victim of this "world's scorn and the proud man's contumely" changed his desperate resolution, and resolved to keep his temper and endure once more, by that mute appeal of his infant's helpless state! How often have I, when my nerves were fretted and my whole heart was sick with toil and weariness, felt it impossible to stop, and that I must indeed do or die, because the Voice from the cradle pierced me to the very soul!

And so it happened at the time of which I am speaking.

I had gone home one day purposely to break the sad truth to Ellen, that my health was giving way, that rest and change I must have, and perhaps must take to some out-of-doors labour, and must till my own field, and live on scanty bread in a cottage, unseen and unknown; but just as I entered the room she held up and danced and dandled little Emmy, so innocently smiling and stretching out her little hands for me to take her, that I had not the courage to say a word. I felt new strength and spirit within me, and determined, though for the twentieth time, to take heart and try again.

About a year before this time I had heard of the death of Lord Oxton. My late pupil had succeeded to the title, but had soon returned to his continental rambles, to hunting in Algiers, and salmon-fishing in Norway; so there was nothing to prevent Lady Oxton from treasuring the memory of her dear son Sidney amidst the groves of Norlands, and shedding her good Christian influence on all the poor around that most patrician abode.

"Did you not say," said Ellen, one evening, "that the Lord Chancellor was once a visitor at Norlands, and as much charmed as all other gentlemen seemed to have been with that cruelly homicidal lady?"

"Certainly," I replied: "they were very good and sympathetic friends, indeed. But what of that?"

"Oh! never mind," said Ellen. "Time has passed on. I suppose Lady Oxton has lost all her good looks and fascinations by this time: otherwise, I was thinking you were a very great favourite: did I not understand?"

"Not from me, Ellen; you never understood it, I am sure. Lady Oxton was very kind to me, and seemed really interested in my welfare; but I am sure I never said so to you."

"No, no. It was not from you I heard it, but from somebody else. I remember, now. But I did hear that you reminded Lady Oxton so forcibly of her lost son, and that she felt quite pained at your departure from Norlands."

"And so you were thinking her interest with the Chancellor might avail just now?"

"Drowning people catch at straws; and you know that the living of Elkerton, just in her ladyship's neighbourhood, must soon be at the Chancellor's disposal. But we have had enough of disappointment. There is nothing for nothing in this world. I suppose Lady Oxton has some poor relations; most people have, and generally they are parsons. But—but——" And then she sighed deeply.

"Of what were you thinking, Ellen?"

"I was thinking then of my dear mother. She liked Lady Oxton very much, and I never shall forget the kind inquiries, day after day, made through Lady Oxton's steward, in my dear mother's last illness."

This conversation did not quite pass out of my mind. There was a small church, and small population, quite within my strength, wasted as it had been—with house and 400*l.* a-year! But so disgusted was I at the piles of applications I used to see encumbering Lord Oxton's table, for his interest for appointments of all kinds, from a tide-waiter to a consulship, that I had ever since regarded such applications as deservedly to be answered by a common form or circular kept for the purpose, and filled up simply with the name and date.

However, it now was most urgent that something should be done. The alteration in Ellen's appearance eventually wrought me up to such a pitch of desperation that my whole nature seemed changed. The reserve, and pride, and independence of the man had stood a long siege, but was sapped and undermined at last; and one night, when Ellen had gone early to bed, quite faint and worn out by Master Tommy, who was really like nothing else than a fat, restless, little sucking-pig, ever wriggling in her lap and rubbing his nose against her breast, I took up a pen and addressed a letter to Lady Oxton.

I cannot say exactly what I wrote. I only remember I had been pacing the room, and moving restlessly from one seat to another, till the thought suddenly came upon me, and I seized a pen—men just as suddenly seize a razor or a pistol when in that frame of mind—dashed off a letter in a hand as agitated as my feelings, and then rushed out and posted it, and thus pur-

chased a little hope and a little calm to my fevered and racking brain.

I sketched my struggles, and how long I had borne them, unwilling to increase the troubles of others, well knowing that even the most prosperous of my friends could not long be sorrow-free; but that I had a wife, daughter of Mr. Horley of Bowdon Hall,—her patient and uncomplaining spirit was beyond all praise, especially considering the tender nurture of her early years. I had also four children, who I feared would soon be motherless; and when I thought that the living of Elkerton, possibly within her ladyship's power to command, would support us through the few years that alone separated us from a little independence, I could no longer forbear disclosing our position, worn and wasted as we both were with seven years' toil and anxiety in the close and crowded town of Lachford, where we had been living on little more than 150*l.* a-year.

I said not a word to Ellen of what I had done. I had little hope of success. I certainly did feel that I had now a ticket in the lottery, and that was all. Still, it is a little heart's ease to feel, "Supposing the prize should be mine!"—However, no one knew better than I did that hungry and ravenous expectants hover about and await the fall of a rich incumbent, like eagles around a dying camel. I also reflected that Lady Oxton had seen many persons since she last saw me, nor could eight long years have failed to change the interest or deaden the feelings amidst all the fret and friction of busy life: so, next morning I felt that I had done a foolish thing, and I would almost have recalled my letter if I could.

I knew enough of applications made to persons of rank to be aware that a secretary is entrusted with all formal negatives, and that when a reply from a secretary generally comes by return of post. However, when the second, third, and even the fourth day had passed, I ceased to think any more about the matter. Then, our daily cares and anxieties dragged on, and another letter from my sister alarmed us by some ambiguous expressions about my poor father—his Railway, and the warnings of Mr. Meadows.

In this painful state of mind and feeling we were now living, and we had just returned one afternoon from our little marketing, when the girl said an old gentleman had inquired for us and left his card, and would call again. Our nerves were in that state of tension that the slightest thing would make them vibrate. So, up-stairs I ran most anxiously, and Ellen followed close behind me, to see the card. No sooner did it meet our eyes than we both

turned pale at seeing the ominous name of "Mr. Meadows!" At once the painful suspicion rushed into our minds that Mr. Meadows' forebodings, urged so emphatically for years about this dreadful railway, had come true at last, and he was about now to announce to me the hopeless ruin of my father, and, perhaps, the sacrifice of my small reversion, too. Ellen looked most expressively, and almost imploringly at me, and then sank prostrate and unstrung in every nerve upon the sofa.

Again and again we read the card, as if our eyes would burn it. It was simply "Mr. Meadows,"—that was all. So, Robinson Crusoe simply saw the footmark on the sand. Jeannie Deans heard nothing but her own name pronounced on the lonely heath, and imagination conjured up a train of horrors. But, "What time was he to call again?" This we both most anxiously inquired. "Dinnaw!" said Peggy. "Stay; but, my good girl, do try to recollect." "Din-naw," was—oh, how provoking is such stupidity at such a time!—the only answer.

Half-an-hour passed, while I looked many a time both up and down the street for the tall figure of a silver-haired old man. Ellen became more and more in an agony of doubt and fear. "Nothing can be worse than this suspense," Ellen said at last. "Now, my dear Harry, do pray inquire at the hotel if Mr. Meadows is there." I was just putting on my hat to go when a porter came with a note, of which the following were, I believe, the contents:—

"The Mitre, July 30th, 18—.

"DEAR SIR,

"I am sorry I did not find you at home, having business of some importance to despatch before the evening mail leaves Lachford. Allow me to request that you will come to me as soon as you can. Mrs. Austin should also enter into our consultations. To save time, if you have a copy of your marriage settlement, be pleased to bring it with you.

"Yours sincerely,

"EDWIN MEADOWS.

"To the Rev. H. Austin."

Our most painful suspicions were now confirmed indeed. The marriage settlement (not that I had a copy)! What could it mean? The object of the request in an instant came home as one dead shock to my heart. I had heard of such arrangements in tales of ruin. I and my wife were to be asked to sign away our

expectations in the future to save my father from present insolvency! I dared not to give utterance to the thought, but it was impossible that I could avoid this conclusion. Oh, horrible, most agonising was the trial! The ruin of my father, mother, sisters, on the one hand, and my dear wife and her babes on the other!

On receiving this awful summons we were too excited to delay a minute. With breathless haste we followed the porter to the place of meeting, though Ellen turned back as she was going out of the door, and passionately, or, I may say, convulsively, kissed the dear children, and then cast a last glance at them before clear of the room. We were soon at the door of Mr. Meadows' apartment, and I could distinctly feel Ellen's heart beat as she leant upon my arm.

On entering the room, the old gentleman rose and shook us both so kindly and sympathetically by the hand, that we almost pitied him for the painful duty he had evidently come to perform.

"I hope you are quite well, my dear friends," he said. "But well?—No, a long way from well, I fear. Your anxieties have been very great, no doubt."

The sad news we felt was coming now.

This was the prelude. Our hearts beat quicker than ever.

"But don't be down-hearted," he continued, after a pause; "we will see what we can do. Mr. Austin sends his love to you. He is much better—much better, indeed; because easier in his mind than he has been for some time."

Then, we thought, the sad blow must have come days ago, and we have not heard it till now!

After a pause—most painful to us—Mr. Meadows continued, —"Indeed, if you had seen how happy he and your mother were last night——"

"Then no harm—" interrupted Ellen—"no ruin, has befallen him! May we indeed hope so? Pray break the truth at once. Now, dear Mr. Meadows, you are very kind and feeling; but don't spare us," said Ellen, imploringly, "but let us know the worst——"

"No harm whatever, my dear lady, let me assure you—none. I am come on a very different mission. It is, indeed, not a word—nothing about Mr. Austin. How sorry I am that I should have alarmed you! No, no; ever since his sister's fortune relieved him from his difficulties, all has gone well with him. I have had no cause to scold him any more. Though, you remember, I used to scold him, and I was very plain-spoken, and almost quarrelled with him."

"But you wanted our marriage settlement, I think," rejoined I. "That did, indeed, puzzle me."

"Yes, yes—very true—Oh! now I see your fear and my mistake. This was quite enough to alarm you, fearing, as I did, these mad speculations. So, you really did not see what other purpose that document could serve? You must know, then, I come from the good and kind Lady Oxton: she hopes to procure you the living of Elkerton. The Rector is now near his end, and I am to consult with you as to what is best for your immediate comfort. Lady Oxton feels much for your trials, of which the Archdeacon has also spoken; and it occurs to me, that since you would not like to be under any pecuniary obligation, and ready money must be wanted, your future expectations—when you have this living and its emoluments—will justify her ladyship in advancing you 200*l.* or 300*l.* at interest. Only, we stipulate that you must leave this place at once: it is evidently killing you. But—but—excuse me a moment."

The good man's heart was full to overflowing, and he was glad of an excuse to leave the room. After a few minutes—during which we were too much stunned to realise what seemed so much like a dream, and thrilling fears so suddenly changed to sanguine hopes were producing a strange revulsion in our breasts—Mr. Meadows returned, followed by the waiter with some wine, of which he made us take a glass. Still, the scene was almost too much for him. "Poor young creatures, so early tried!" I heard him say to himself; and indeed we understood that he afterwards reported to Lady Oxton that he was just in time to save us from the last stage of exhaustion in mind as well as body.

"Then, this is no dream?" said Ellen. "But are we really promised the living of Elkerton?"

"Be quite easy, my dear friend, on that point," said Mr. Meadows, kindly; "if not that living, some other, shortly. But it will be Elkerton, I have no doubt. The Chancellor has given a definite promise, or I would not have run the remotest chance of disappointing you."

"Oh, my dear children!" she exclaimed, and sank back hysterically sobbing in her chair.

The presence of Mr. Meadows, and indeed, regard for his feelings, served as a stimulus that I might not give way too, though really the glass of wine came very timely to my aid: for, nerves unnaturally strained will at the first moment relax, and then the tears of the strongest run down like water.

"A very pretty place is Elkerton," said Mr. Meadows, after a little pause, "and a fine bracing atmosphere. The Rector has laid out a great deal on the house and gardens, Mrs. Austin; and there is every comfort. I passed a night there the last time I went to receive the tenants at the Norlands audit. The repose and tranquillity of the retreat you will find most charming. But now, you must keep quiet. I did promise myself the gratification, an hour ago, of taking you back with me, and your children too; and I thought I could leave Mr. Austin to arrange. But now I see that a day or two of rest, to recover your composure and talk it all over with your husband, this may indeed be desirable ——

"So far my holiday is not quite complete; for on these happy errands—which, though very rare, have come before to-day to compensate for the scenes of distress and ruin which often tear and lacerate the hearts of men grown old in my profession—I do feel very childish. I don't like to lose sight of my reward or my toy!"

Mr. Meadows, besides being a country banker, acted as steward to Norlands, and was a general agent for landed property.

"Yes," he said, "I feel, like a child with a new plaything, that I like to take my toy home with me, so as fully to realise the happy day. You will be glad to hear that I looked in upon Mr. Austin last night, and told him all the happiness in store for you. Your mother, Mr. Austin, wept for joy, and would have come with me, I do believe, short as the notice was, if her husband had given her any encouragement; and then she started off, late as it was for visiting, to Mr. and Mrs. Horley, and told the news to them. Next post, I suppose, you will hear all about it. If you are equal to the fatigue, Mrs. Austin, we could easily billet the children among us. Indeed, I think we should all want you at the same time."

"Then this is no dream!" I said to myself. "For, here the little accidents, comforts, and courtesies of prosperity, which one and all shrank and shrivelled to nothing before the withering blast of poverty—all, all are following in the train of my returning fortune!"

By this time, Ellen—what with the relief of tears pouring out, and the stimulus of the wine pouring in—had a little recovered, and was composing herself on the sofa, where—not without many a glance from me—after a while we both left her, and retired to discuss the details of the matter at the further end of the room.

The information required about the settlement was soon given;

and when Mr. Meadows heard we had no debts, but that every week Ellen had received so many pounds, or shillings rather, to lay in her little stores from one Saturday to the next—that worthy old model of all prudence and integrity said it made him the more happy to help such persons: for, hardly ever had he known a case of "genteel poverty," without finding a great deal of very "ungenteel" conduct behind the scenes. However, he was instructed to make an advance of ready money equal to the occasion, and persuaded me to take fifty pounds, for which he drew out a voucher on account of Lady Oxton. At the same time he said he thought, that with a certain 400*l.* a-year, and a house, he should probably find members of our own family ready enough to advance money, and to keep us clear of the semblance of obligation to strangers.

At the sound of this, Ellen's eyes sparkled through her tears. To accept a living was honourable enough, but, though her once delicate little hands had often been soiled with menial occupations, her poverty had not yet impaired her self-respect. Lachford, she said, we could leave behind; but when once at Elkerton, she did hope to feel like a lady once more, with no unpleasant associations.

Of course we were not long in trying to convey to Mr. Meadows our sense of relief, and our grateful feelings to himself and Lady Oxton. On this subject it was not like the character of Mr. Meadows to let us say much. He stopped us by replying, "My dear young people, I have seen with my own eyes where you were living, and I can also see the ravages that care and anxiety have made in your health. My visit does indeed seem providential. Rest and quiet, and a perfect change of scene, will, I hope, soon restore those roses I so well remember in my young friend's cheeks. I have not forgotten, Mrs. Austin, and never shall forget, your dear mother. I think I see that mother now in you. Lady Oxton and I have often conversed about her. But I will not advert to that painful history further than to say, that when your husband's letter was received, her ladyship would not rest until she had taken steps to preserve the daughter, as she said, for the full inheritance of that dear lady's fortune, and—you should never want a mother's care."

It will easily be supposed that so painful a story as that already related of Mrs. Horley's death spread far and wide, and was not likely to be forgotten in the county. And here I cannot help remarking, on how little a point a crisis, great as life and death, will sometimes turn. For if, with the touching allusion I made to

my wife in my letter, I had not parenthetically mentioned "daughter of the late Mrs. Horley, of Bowdon Hall," who can say but so great and prompt an effort on the part of her ladyship might never have been made?

All this helped us to realise and digest our altered fortune: the suddenness of it did, indeed, utterly confound me. For, even if the living were ultimately promised me, it had never occurred to me but much painful anxiety and care for ready money, as well as a difficulty in leaving Lachford, must intervene, and perhaps my dear wife would not survive the interval of hopes and fears, and all the cruel law's delays.

"Come, now, Mrs. Austin," said our friend, "you must brighten up; though really it is not often I have the happiness to cause tears of joy. Indeed, far more frequently my visits are ominous of sorrow. A country banker's life is one that remains to be written yet. *Tales of a Physician* are commonly supposed to relate to a subject unequalled in interest: still, the Almighty Father tempers the chastisements which He sends us with feelings in unison with the occasion, and so far He alleviates our sorrow. But the sufferings I see are those which men bring upon themselves by covetousness, by hasting to be rich rather than to be honest, by blighted ambition, with envy, malice, and all uncharitableness, rankling in the breast: this it is that racks the mind beyond all endurance, till brain-fever or paralysis come, as it were, just in time to turn the reproaches of a host of angry relatives—many of them as guilty as the sufferer himself—into trembling and pity to see the strong man overthrown! These are the dark spirits which haunt my path; though frequently I can say, that had it not been for me—resolutely refusing to put off the evil day for a deeper fall and wider ruin—many a family that now holds together would have been at this moment eating the bread of misery."

I cannot describe how we parted from Mr. Meadows, still less how my dear wife hung enraptured over the children on her return. I tried to make her spare herself, and go early to bed; but the excitement was as yet too great. Alice, and even Freddy, were old enough to understand a little about the pleasure of a "beautiful house and gardens, and a place for rabbits, and a wire house for dickey-birds, like Dr. Sackville's;" and so we talked, and planned, and enjoyed pleasures, reflected in each other's eyes, and congratulated each other, till we were tired.

Meanwhile Peggy's ears were as open as her eyes had been before; and it happened with her as with ourselves, that she heard

of joy where—judging from the lawyer-looking gentleman, "come with an execution, perhaps," and our visible emotion and anxiety—she had, it seems, expected sorrow, and might very naturally have augured ill; for "being sold up," and such reverses of fortune, were not uncommon in Pump Street. And Peggy had told her fears to Mrs. Tinson's girl, and how she was afraid her place was gone, and that she should have to look out for another mistress. All this Peggy told her at the pump; for this pump, with a handle and spout in each garden, was common to both tenants, and was a place where, when these two maids-of-all-work met, words flowed forth as well as water. So, Mrs. Tinson soon "made so bold" as to step in and make inquiries; and as all that class of people are very emotional and demonstrative in their feelings, when the good woman heard the news she literally "lifted up her voice and wept." But we were by this time so well schooled in discerning a genuine and gentle heart, however deficient in gentility, that we were all the more happy for such humble but hearty sympathies.

It was now about seven o'clock, and a fine July evening, and Ellen said I must not delay to inform our kind friends the Sackvilles; and here Ellen wished to go with me. But this I resisted. Indeed, I trembled to look at her, she was so pale and wan, and evidently quite fevered with excitement.

It so happened that those excellent people had been talking of us that very afternoon. Mrs. Sackville was really attached to my wife. The Doctor said she loved her as a sister, and was often unhappy at the thought that Ellen's trials were bringing her to the grave. It may, therefore, be better imagined than described how they received the happy news. The lady was so overjoyed, she did not know how to vent or to express her feelings; but the Doctor had seen so much of the alternations of pleasure and of sorrow in this life, that he was not so easily elated: he simply squeezed my hand affectionately, and looked upon me with eyes liquid with softness and sympathy, and then sat quiet and thoughtful for a few minutes, and let his good wife do the talking for him; which part, also, she was particularly well able to discharge at all times: so Providence had matched her with a silent husband, as one way of maintaining the balance of power in the realms of speech.

This lady, too, had known her trials; and there was a time when she would but too gladly have changed lots with Ellen. This sad occasion was when her Edwin and her Matilda—two children out of five—sickened of scarlet fever, and were carried away from their pretty frilled cots and luxurious nursery—venti-

lated on the Doctor's own principles: but all would not avail — one of the little dears in one week and one in the next, each in a pretty blue and silver-plated coffin, for me to bury in the quiet grave.

At length the Doctor broke silence, and interrupted his wife with these words: "We can find room for all the children, can we not, if I go and fetch them up here?"

"Room, my dear Teddy! There is too much room in our nursery," said the lady with a sigh. "Yes, Ellen was so kind to my dear babes; and now hers are doubly welcome to the same little beds, though I know I shall fancy my own darlings are come back to me when I see hers sleeping in the same cots. But yes —yes— do pray, dear!" she said, in her usual state of excitement; "do go and fetch them, this very night, and Ellen and I will rejoice together; and she shall tell me all about it; and I will plan with her about moving and travelling, and all that— Oh, dear! well, this shall be a happy evening; quite like a scene in a play; all going to be so happy to-night; and all, I fear, so painfully anxious only this very morning — I am so delighted at the thought— I'll order the carriage, and John and Mary shall ——"

In this manner the kind woman was running on, and venting all her hearty feelings, when the Doctor said,—

"Stay, my dear! but I am not so sure whether we had better do so to-night: though every hour out of the unwholesome air of Pump Street is something gained. But fatigue must be considered, and I am afraid you will talk to her too much."

"Why, as to that, no woman can talk less than I do," said Mrs. Sackville, quite unconscious that she all the time laboured under a constitutional complaint, which we will call a "violent determination of words to the mouth."

The Doctor made a little excuse and a kind of conjugal apology, and then he turned to me and said,—

"You, my dear friend, yourself want a little care; but Mrs. Austin, I must, on a trying occasion like this, treat quite as an invalid, to prevent her becoming such. You and I will go down quietly and take the carriage. My nurse shall come and help us with the children, and meanwhile my kind wife shall prepare a bed. Remember, my dear, directly Mrs. Austin comes, she must be shown to her bedroom. I shall administer something soothing. The youngest child may sleep with her; that will give play to the affections and do her good, and all possible excitement must be avoided. Painful experience, as well as my reading, has taught

me that the revulsion of feeling and the agitation of mind consequent on sudden good fortune, is more to be feared than the stroke of adversity — though, here we have both!"

Mrs. Sackville was made now to understand that the joyous and romantic evening she had promised herself must be delayed. Never mind. She was just as pleased to act nurse; which office she performed very well, indeed, save that while she was enjoining silence on every one around, she kept forgetting she was herself talking all the time.

And so it came to pass that an all-wise Providence, having humbled us both to the dust, having made us many a time look back with deep contrition at our folly and mistaken feelings in counting Susan's sauciness or our dear aunt's little fancies and over-care among the intolerable troubles of this life, and having thus brought every string of the human lyre into that state of tune and harmony, which nothing but adversity ever can effect — the same merciful Providence, which caused us to awake that very morning to a sense of poverty and a troubled spirit, by sunset had plucked every thorn from our pillow, had shifted the scene to one of affluence and repose, and had laid us to sleep, overpowered with thankfulness for the united mercies of both our neighbour and our God.

Next day when Ellen awoke I anxiously inquired how she felt, and most agreeably surprised was I to find that the excitement had done her no harm. After seven years of daily trials, with a little religious feeling, we learn to trust ourselves in the hands of God. What He wills must be, and we are but too glad "to cast our burden upon Him," believing that "He careth for us." So Ellen was not so much elated, and bore the change with thankfulness and composure. I could mention another of the critical periods of my life when I felt exactly the same kind of equanimity, and that no little to the wonder of my friends, simply because they had been less schooled than I had been in the instability of all earthly things.

Next morning we naturally awoke with the feeling, "Is this only a dream?" "Are we really so happy to-day, after being so unhappy yesterday?" — This question was answered by a knock at the door, and the Doctor with our letters, asking if he might inquire after his patient. He looked fondly on the mother with little Emily scrambling all over her, as children do in bed, and then he felt her pulse and said to me, "I wish I always had such patients as your good wife. I often think of the story of the Spartan boy who concealed a stolen fox under his clothes, even

while it was tearing out his vitals. For, such are the ravages of a hidden sorrow. You must indeed, Mrs. Austin, have borne your troubles well to suffer so little by the reaction to be apprehended from so great a change. But keep quiet, and you shall have your breakfast in bed: you will have plenty of visitors up here on the occasion, and I must spare you too long a day. My wife has not had her say yet, and I know there is a hundred-woman power of words under high pressure in that quarter."

"Oh, fie, Dr. Sackville!" said Ellen; "I can't allow this."

"Never mind, Mrs. Austin: don't you tell of me," said the Doctor, as he went laughing and highly delighted out of the room.

And now we opened our letters; for, some there were, both from the house of Horley and the house of Austin. The summer of our fortune had evidently returned with all its luxuriance and rich undergrowth. The kindest attentions were offered; our company was wanted everywhere at the same time; and, what was more striking, we were addressed by Mr. Horley, for the first time during these last seven years, with all the courtesies of former days.

This change is easily explained; Mr. Horley could now boast of his daughter at "the Rectory," and as to poor me, of whom he had many a time spoken contemptuously as a pauper, he could now call me his "son-in-law, the Rector of Elkerton," and even speak as if he were connected with "the family at Norlands."

Mr. Horley, too, was now invalided and gouty: dining out was prohibited; and no other kind of going out is practicable in the country. It is all very easy to say, "Drop in and see us at any time, in the friendly way;" but we cannot *drop* two or three miles, with footman and coachman too, who are as much bent on a party below-stairs as we are in the parlour. Mrs. Horley had found out she could not visit if her husband ceased to do so. Indeed, people did not want her. Visiting Bowdon Hall was one thing—Mrs. Horley sailing into the room alone was quite another thing. She shone only by reflected light; and this they contrived to let her know, saying, "Poor Mr. Horley! How amiable!—how little like husbands in general, to be satisfied to be left at home all by himself."

There is such a thing as "genteel abuse," and the conventional impertinence of the upper circles. In low life people call each other rogues, knaves, and improper characters; in genteel life things equally offensive are conveyed in a roundabout way.

Mrs. Horley, finding that she could not visit with a gouty

husband, hailed the news of Elkerton Rectory as somewhere to go, and something to do; for, with Mrs. Horley, as with other ladies, the dullest of all dull places was that particular place in which her husband resolved to live. One thing was quite plain, from the tone and tenor of Mr. Horley's letter, that the idea of his daughter, and consequently his own dignity, being compromised by any loan from Lady Oxton—this, as Mr. Meadows rightly judged, would not be entertained for an instant.

But my dear mother's letter was, indeed, refreshing. She said how she had, for years, grieved over Lachford as the very grave of ourselves and children,—that she had rarely sat down to a meal without thinking what kind of meal there was for us, and that those dear children—for, our children were evidently far more engrossing to her than ourselves—would look so pretty and rosy at Elkerton, in proper pure air, and with plenty of good wholesome food. And how convenient was Elkerton!—near enough for her to come and see us, and play with her little darlings.

This was all very natural. Nothing freshens up an old lady like the sight of her grandchildren. Still, we felt rather touchy at being told we had been starved!

Of course, the news spread fast in Lachford: by noon every one had heard the story, "with variations," and it acted like a touchstone to show the real nature of people. Some, from whom we expected not a word, shook us cordially with both hands, and said, how happy they were to see us restored to our proper sphere. Others, whose congratulations we never doubted, came with forced civilities on their lips, when all the while it was evident that envy at our good fortune was chilling and curdling every word they uttered.

This was especially true of Mrs. Vine. For, Mrs. Vine was never quite at ease in Ellen's company, always feeling that Ellen had been accustomed to a better circle than herself, and attracted more attention from the clergy who met at the Rectory; and now the Rectory of Lachford sounded poor, indeed, in comparison with the "Norlands living"—for so it was called,—and the aristocratic society of Elkerton.

The people of Lachford were always gasping for something fresh—news as well as air. The "good fortune of the poor Austins," with "I am sure they wanted it badly enough," was on every tongue; and now we seemed, with our interesting promotion, to be the common property of the town at large. Numbers felt a day's importance from the great and exciting news they were bursting to tell. If the story had been one of ruin, or an

"execution" of our goods or ourselves—for Pump Street, with the County Gaol round the corner, we knew, had seen an execution of both kinds more than once—it would have done as well, or perhaps better, for some people. Our good fortune lost nothing in the telling. But we need not wonder that our elevation was exaggerated; for, the richer we were represented, the more exciting was the news, and the more importance it reflected on the tellers.

Experience had by this time taught me to discern the wide difference between true friends and false.

Ellen said she could number a few humble friends never to be forgotten: but, as for those of the swallow tribe—as ready now to spread their fine feathers in the sunshine as they had before been to fly before the winter of our fortunes—she rejoiced in the Sackvilles' carriage, as enabling her to move above the level of their false and repulsive attentions. But she had one little plan of her own. One long morning she must spend in Pump Street: indeed, besides necessary arrangements with the person in charge of the house, she felt that she had received great mercies in that lowly abode. Three babes had been born there; and she must be left there for a short time to her own meditations alone.

Her thoughts and feelings were too sacred for me here to express in words; but—if it be given to the spirits of the blest to float around those loved ones from whom, amidst the fondest yearnings of the hearts, they have been untimely snatched away—I could picture the pale and feeble figure of a pious woman kneeling at a certain bedside in prayer, and the faint outline of some angelic form poised above, and overshadowing her with seraphic wings.

"And part of this little plan, Ellen," I said, "I may guess to be to order a little luncheon there, with plenty of cake and wine to regale the infant luggage-trains, and the little coffin-makers, too."

"Yes, I would, indeed, invite the Tinsons and the Gregsons. Now, do not laugh at them. I must show them a little attention before I go: and if the poor creatures should ever want change of air—as we know, indeed, they must—I shall not be compromised by a kind action of this kind even at Elkerton Rectory. Then there are among our furniture many little articles not worth moving, which we can distribute among these friends. Add to this, you must provide me with a bag of half-crowns to leave a substantial P. P. C. at the houses of the poor. Some cards in envelopes, for slight and formal acknowledgments, will amply repay

divers inattentions; and this will set us free as regards nine out of ten of our more fashionable acquaintances."

"And what did I do with my church and parish?" The tidings that a benefice—so it was euphuistically termed—was vacant, I was soon called on to confirm: so I easily arranged with one of many clergymen, ambitious of promotion, to give him my stipend—together with the prestige of being already the officiating minister at the church which he intended to solicit—in return for his services in my parish till such time as I had formally resigned. Three auctioneers requested the honour of selling off my furniture. But Ellen received a hint from Mrs. Sackville that our names would probably be advertised, on flaring handbills, all over the town, with—"The valuable furniture and effects of the Rev. Henry Austin, now to be seen at his residence in Pump Street!" and as all our little feelings of pride began to return to their old quarters very fast, this touch of the ridiculous we contrived to avoid, by ordering some few packages to be made of the better part, with a private sale to dispose of the remainder.

But—after seven years—to part from my parishioners, and those of the poorest class, and many old and sick people dependent on my kindness and sympathy,—this is no slight trial for any feeling heart.

There was Eliza Weedon in a deep decline, and it went to my heart to tell the poor young woman that another minister must finish what I had begun.

There was old Hannah Freeman, whom I had promised that she should be buried as near as possible to her daughter's grave, and this promise she now asked me how I could provide to fulfil!

There were also many old people who, as they had usually received the alms, had now learnt to depend on it as an integral part of their income; sixpence a-week of that money had long paid old Molly Hall's rent, who was thus enabled to spend more on her tea and her snuff, which were "the chief of her diet."—I promised to pay the rent of her one room as long as she lived: Molly was then ninety-four, and she lived to be ninety-eight!

But it was evident in other respects that my departure unsettled everything. The next minister, full well they knew, would be beset by all the inveterate impostors of the place, and little chance had the feeble and the bed-ridden in making known their honest claims amidst so artful and so clamorous a throng.

Besides, I had become the friend of many a poor, toiling, suffering family. A passing word would often suffice to break the monotony of their irksome existence, and sweet indeed is the

music of our speech to those poor souls, who, were it not for their minister, would rarely hear a kind and sympathetic word.

This will show with what pain a pastor tears himself from his parish, and how many, he feels, he leaves behind who will be "sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they will see his face no more."—However, I had remained as long, or longer, than I had any right to remain. I had outstayed my health and strength, and power to do my duty satisfactorily in so laborious a parish; and—I wonder how many pastors at this hour, worn out by heavy duty without doors, and a heavy heart within, are trying hard to reconcile their duty to their family with their duty to their God!

It was on a Tuesday that Mr. Meadows stipulated on behalf of Lady Oxton—it was his own suggestion to her ladyship—that we should immediately prepare to leave. On the Saturday following Dr. Sackville's carriage conveyed us to the station, and with such allusions to our next happy meeting as may well be supposed, a husband, wife, and four children and a nurse, looking like a sickly family in quest of health, bade adieu to the town of Lachford.*

* Another poor, toiling Henry Austin—quite a working clergyman, in every respect a gentleman—with a wife and family—one miserable from poverty though ministering to the affluent—the author will be most happy to point out to any other Lady Oxton, in the West-end of London.

CHAPTER XVI.

HOW, SETTLING IN ELKERTON, WE WERE UNSETTLED AFTER ALL —HOW THE WIDOW HORLEY DOES NOT BETTER HERSELF— AND HOW DIFFERENT MEMBERS OF OUR FAMILY THOUGHT THEY COULD DO A GREAT DEAL BETTER IF THEY HAD THEIR TIME OVER AGAIN—AND HOW LADIES SHOULD BEWARE OF CERTAIN GENTLEMEN IN BLACK.

In all our doubts and fears for the future, one thing is too often left out of the calculation; namely, how all the pieces in the game of life are insensibly shifted by Father Time. Ten years make a mighty change. Our estate in expectancy comes nearer to possession; death makes gaps in the family circle, so our share becomes larger; and, perhaps, some aged relation is glad to offer us a home for our company and our care. Besides, family feuds wear out; new calls on new-comers seem like a thrice-told tale; and our own relations prove the best friends after all, in irritable old age—so truly "the winter of our discontent."

All this Mr. Horley had begun to realise. The more pretty frocks and playthings he gave to our children, the less suspicious he probably was of the silent reproaches of his motherless daughter Ellen. It was also easy to read in Ellen's tender looks, sorrow and compassion for her evidently declining father. At one time he had almost quarrelled with me for disgracing the family, and putting it in the power of a certain invidious neighbour to associate Bowdon Hall with Pump Street. But now, he found out I was "not so bad a fellow after all," simply because in the days of his goutiness he found that others were so much worse. For, Mr. Horley discovered, like many a man before him, that where there is neither wine nor wit for entertainment, and a man has lived all for self, a stray card of inquiry may be brought up on a waiter, but not a soul without "expectations" will be ushered into his closely-curtained room.

Ten years' worldly experience had taught me to think more kindly of the old gentleman: for, I brought away from Lachford

a very different estimate of human perfection than I took with me, and I had learnt to look with sorrow upon sin, and to regard it as own child of luxury and ease; and, indeed, in my heart I do pity that prosperity which dazzles the eye to things as they are, and scorches and withers every delicate fibre of the soul.

Ellen's remarks were a study to me. She said on a day of pianoforte tuning, "It seems to me, Harry, as if we had been tuned. Poor dear aunt! I don't think she could strike such notes of discord in me, if she were alive now." She said at another time, "The greatest relief I feel is, that my whole mind no longer centres in half-pounds and half-pence as it used to do. Really, for some months, I could not see an honest helping of a joint of meat, without my old fears of that 'unkindest cut of all,' which would leave too little for the morrow."

We were now at Bowdon Hall, where Mr. Horley, after many weeks of almost solitary confinement, with only drives in a close carriage, and all visiting at an end, was very glad of our company; as also was Mrs. Horley, too.

This lady found things marvellously changed for the worse. There was not one pivot on which the Bowdon day used to turn but now was gone. No one dropped in to luncheon; the post brought little else but circulars; and the newspaper lost its interest. There was, perhaps, something to "take four times a-day," and a pretty good talk to be had out of the doctor, and that had been all their variety; so, all this monotony it was delightful to have broken by taking the children to grandpapa, and by discussing all kinds of plans about Elkerton. For, I may here mention that the old Rector was dead, and my appointment gazetted in the usual manner. The county paper contained an article to the following effect: —

"We are happy to hear the Lord Chancellor has appointed the Rev. Henry Austin, son-in-law of Thomas Horley, Esq., of Bowdon Hall, to the beautiful Rectory of Elkerton. This living adjoins the estate of Norlands, and has usually been held, as we hear it will be in this present instance, by a family honoured by the friendship of the noble house of Oxton."

After this article appeared, Mr. Meadows had not much difficulty in raising money. His way of putting the case to Mr. Horley was very ingenious. He talked of Bowdon Hall as about to be connected with the grandeur of Norlands; and then he spoke of money for our furnishing, and a little capital to begin with; and how he might advise Lady Oxton to take such security as I could give if ——

"Not for the world!" said Mr. Horley.

Of course not. All the charms of genteel sensations—all the beams expected to fall obliquely from Norlands upon Bowdon, would be lost indeed by a single mendicity act like that.

"Then," said Mr. Meadows, "you will yourself make the advance of part of your daughter's fortune at interest?"

This was agreed, so far.

But Mr. Meadows carried the siege one step further.

"The capital then being provided, your life-interest in the amount required will be but a trifle you know, Mr. Horley."

"Oh! never mind the interest," said the father. "Indeed, the whole state of the case is altered now. While my daughter seemed married to a man who—who—I mean to say, while things were too bad to admit of mending, there was little inducement to throw money away; but now here is some solid satisfaction. The Rector had some good things in his rooms: we must contrive to buy up these, and you must help us to a valuation. I should like to see things comfortable, and Ellen is a nice, dear girl," he said, warming up to a good paternal simmer; though really I could not help thinking that Ellen was not at all a nicer girl than when he left her to pine away in Pump Street. "And my expenses," he continued, "now are small. I have done with those ruinous dinner-parties"—here Mrs. Horley groaned—"so I can afford to help the young people a little."

While thus our circumstances were mending, we both were fast mending too, as well we might: for, we had better air to breathe, relief to our brains, and a generous diet, without thinking of the cost. But one thing was more vital than all—we could indulge in the genial emotions of the heart. We now were loving and being loved. All that used to jar on our tastes and feelings was far away, and we lived in a daily sunshine of hope and happiness.

However, it surprised every one to see how little we were elated. My dear mother talked of nothing but Elkerton, and what we should do, and how happy we should be; and she complained at last that we did not seem to realise it, and scarcely appeared to her to believe it was all true. She did not understand, we had been so long tossed at the mercy of the winds and waves of fortune, that rest and repose were all we yet could think of; also, that we were too far subdued by long years of disappointment to be very quickly elated again. Then my mother proposed parties within doors and pic-nics out. She must do something

to celebrate the event—she must do something to amuse us; "what should it be?"

All we wanted was to be left to wander from one home to the other, or to lie on the green slopes, or to help the gleaners in the cornfield, or to listen to the creaking waggon or the farm-yard cries, and follow out the associations of childish days gone by.

"I never in my life did see two such poor worn-out creatures!" said my father. "Most truly did nurse say, you looked both dragged all to pieces."

And now my sister Fanny came to compare notes matrimonial. She had married a naval officer in spite of my father's prudent advice, and was now a widow.

Good advice with my father, it will be understood by this time, was like medicine with a doctor—the last thing he ever thought of taking himself. He foretold wrecks at sea and courts-martial ashore, and said there was no being up to those sailors—one whom he remembered had a wife in every port!

Well, this was a strange match. Fanny's husband was ten months at sea to two ashore;—very like an alliance between a fowl and a duck. This kept them very polite to each other when they did meet, and always on their best behaviour; but when at last he settled ashore, Fanny could not submit to his amphibious ways; and he one day declared that he could command five hundred men, but one mutinous woman was more refractory than them all.

"Now, was not I right," said Fanny, "when I told you about marrying a 'settler?' Yes, you were a happy man to secure Ellen. When once we are married we don't know where we may be thrown, or what new life we may have to lead. Fancy poor me, dragged about from Portsmouth to Plymouth, or Plymouth to Portsmouth, and watching the weather-vane, or reading with anxious eyes the news of her Majesty's navy! My husband never saw me nurse an infant in his life—they were all strong children before he came home; and he never saw Teddy till he could run alone. And he, poor fellow, was living on weevily biscuits and salt meat, and the worst of water to wash it down! Really, Harry, you were better off in Pump Street. Who ever heard of such an apology for matrimony! What woman ever had such a life as mine!"

Fanny was not the first woman who has married into a life of care, where she fondly yearned for a life of affection.

And now I must ask my reader to take a flying leap over

from six to seven months. He knows all about entering a new house with new servants and new visitors, when you can hardly find your way about, and are afraid of running counter to the customs of the place.

It is a fine day at the end of May. The greenhouse is being emptied into the flower-beds; a middle-aged lady and gentleman are helping us—these are Dr. and Mrs. Sackville. One pale and sickly little child is making a kind of dirt-pie in a miniature garden in the corner, assisted by my Alice and her little sister. That is Mrs. Tinson's child, benefited at once by the skill of the Doctor and the fresh air of Elkerton. They remained with us three weeks, and while they were with us we received one of many visits from Lady Oxton.

It was remarked by Thucydides, that the favours we confer cement friendship more firmly than the favours which we receive; because it is natural to take an interest and to watch the fruits of our own actions. These fruits, indeed, her Ladyship abundantly enjoyed. She said she never did see a more happy family, and it was quite a lesson to any spoilt child of luxury to see how simple were our pleasures, and how slight a thing would touch a chord to vibrate harmoniously to our very souls.

Lady Oxton was much pleased when I mentioned Ellen's idea that our feelings were once far from the proper tone and harmony, but after seven years' tuning we felt that no mere imaginary causes would disturb us. I reminded her also of Paley's remark; what a merciful adaptation is it that forbids every colour in creation to be painful to the eye, and every sound to be jarring to the ear. "I see," said her Ladyship; "and you would add, How great is the blessing to find everything that happens to us working together for good, because in unison with a truly chastened heart!"

Thankful as we were for all we enjoyed, it was not at the first visit that we could either of us express our feelings to her Ladyship. Naturally, our hearts were too full for commonplace words, and we saw intuitively that this noble friend in need was hurrying from one topic to another, purposely to avoid any formal acknowledgment. However, there was no mistaking the gratitude of Ellen's manner, as she pointed out everything about the Rectory, and explained all the comforts and advantages, and then said very elegantly, "I sincerely hope Mr. Meadows has truthfully pictured the very trying position from which your Ladyship's kindness has delivered us. One day, it may be, another Mr. Meadows, and perhaps a *Mrs.* Meadows too, may be wanted to give

effect—indeed, to assist once more in changing some cottage to a palace."

"And then I am sure," said Lady Oxton, "you will most kindly assist me. You look upon me, then, as the good-natured Fairy. Yes, to command wealth and influence is like holding the wand of the enchanter! It is a great power; but then it is a great responsibility. Only suppose I had been the means of placing in this rectory a family unfitted for the charge! But our wand is far less potent than you may imagine. To distinguish a true case of suffering undeserved is very difficult, especially for those who see with others' eyes. When young, I used to regard adversity as a presumption of innocence; but experience has convinced me that it is too often the result of reckless imprudence, or other causes too deeply seated to be reached by me."

On another occasion, Lady Oxton gave yet freer vent to her feelings.

"I began life," she said, "with a very romantic kind of philanthropy; but disappointment in my schemes of charity soon taught me that nothing valuable is accomplished without personal labour and anxious investigation—least of all, the privilege of doing good. When we buy, we look for our money's worth: when we give, it is quite as natural to look for some return in satisfaction—that is, we expect the seed we sow will fructify; and it is the greatest satisfaction to me now to come and see you and Mr. Austin so happy, and to assist you in your school and clubs, and various encouragements to the poor people around you."

Such were the feelings and the interest in us evinced by Lady Oxton. She was at that time in her widow's mourning, and about sixty years of age, according to the *Peerage;* and sorrow had combined with age to add dignity to her pale but high-born cast of features.

The interest Lady Oxton conceived for Ellen was increased by the deep impression that had been made by the cruel fate of Ellen's unhappy mother. For, the first Mrs. Horley had been on two occasions a guest at Norlands.

I should explain, that about once in two years it came to the turn of the principal families in our neighbourhood to be invited to Norlands. For, partly from neighbourly feeling and partly to make a return for kind offices, either political or professional, invitations were sent periodically to the county families, as well as to the banker, the physician, and the mayor of Bowdon—a party of about fifteen in all—to come as on a Monday and return on the Thursday, and so to enjoy two clear days of the rides, and

drives, and shooting, hunting, or fishing, besides two dinner-parties, with Lord and Lady Oxton.

This, with most of the guests, was a kind of friendship which began and ended with the visit; but the first Mrs. Horley was received in the morning in her Ladyship's boudoir, and even consulted as to the nursery arrangements—a kind of conversation between two ladies which always marks something more than a mere conventional intimacy. Now, Lord Oxton, though a far better husband than Mr. Horley, was at the same time so hard and unsympathetic in his nature, that her Ladyship would naturally have a fellow-feeling for any lady who, she had heard, was by no means happy in her home. What wonder, then, that the cruel history of Mrs. Horley's death—happening not long after Lady Oxton's recovery from the birth of a daughter, the only daughter she ever had, who lived but three months—that this memory should burn deep into the indignant soul of Lady Oxton, and dispose her to look with all a mother's tenderness on Ellen?

It was thus that an intimacy arose, as flattering as it was charming to ourselves, and at the same time a comfort and a resource to Lady Oxton. For, all persons, however much of high degree, find by the age of sixty that they are beginning to stand alone in the world; also, that there is a pliant temper and a happiness of disposition in the society of young people truly refreshing to their failing spirits; and this society, as it no longer comes of itself, they are but too glad to be at a little pains to cultivate. And so by degrees her Ladyship heard all of our eventful history. The story of the "basket-fortune" amused her very much. For, how persons with small incomes afforded to dress she never could imagine. But now she discovered that the poor relation was supplied with fine feathers from all the family.

Lady Oxton, by little and little, disclosed her history also.—Happiness, she once remarked, was far more equally divided than was supposed by the humble, when they envied the great. Noblemen were supposed free from the wearing anxiety about money which we had suffered, and that exemption was no little privilege; but even this they did not always enjoy. There was liberty of action with a fortune in the funds, but an entailed estate must be kept up; and if we looked around the country we should see, at the most delightful part of the year, a "basket-fortune" was all the owners enjoyed: the steward and the gardener had all the beauties to themselves.

"My life, Mrs. Austin," she once said, "as compared with yours, has had no balance of blessings on its side. You married

for affection, risking poverty: we too often marry for position, and risk, or rather sacrifice, a life of affection. You know how improving is adversity: you can imagine what kind of character to expect in the spoilt child of prosperity. And such were all the young men among whom my lot was cast—selfish, self-pleasers, most truly 'lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.'

"I had a dear, pious mother, who early imbued me with a sense of religion. But religious ladies were very rare in my youth; even gambling was a temptation and besetting sin among ladies in those days! Follow out in your mind the evil passions stirred to their darkest depths by a wicked thirst for gain; add to this, that the safeguards of all female delicacy and reserve must then be thrown down,—think what must have been the tone of society generally where these things were countenanced, and you will then feel for any Christian woman doomed to move in such a guilty sphere. You are old enough to remember the Sabbath profanation at the Zoological Gardens, till every London pulpit raised a voice against so bad an example. Yes, and even now [not now, 1860], you may see carriages three-deep in Hyde Park, with Saturday nights preferred for plays and operas, and Mondays appointed for entertainments, necessitating Sabbath desecration and robbing the worn-out workmen of their day of rest and season of prayer. Through all this I have lived, in one painful struggle to reconcile my duty to my husband to my duty to my God!

"Now, there are three hundred and sixty-five days in each long year—unhappy days are very long—every one of these days a woman's heart—yet more, a wife's; ay, and yet more still, the heart of a mother—may enjoy conditions of happiness to be sought in vain in the giddy crowd of heartless fashion; and every one of those days she may desire desperately to plunge into the maddest scenes of that Vanity Fair, to forget or to lull the thrill of agony which the insulted woman, the injured wife, or the chilled and neglected mother, may daily find piercing her to the heart.

"Young men of high position, it is most gratifying to see, are now often bent on better things. My good friend, Lord ——, truly said,—

"'The aristocracy will, indeed, be 'the cheap defence of nations' when—as they seem to promise now—they vie with each other in schemes of enlightened charity, and when they not only stand between the people and the crown, but when, as it were, they establish a new feudal system, and live to 'deliver the poor that cried, and the fatherless orphan that had none to help him.' However, young men in my youth were too often spendthrifts and

roués, and many a lady in my station has confessed she never knew the happiness of pure affection; and wealth is, indeed, a poor compensation for the untold riches of a composed and cheerful heart. Many persons will remark, What are ten thousand acres to the man, a pale prisoner of one close chamber? but few consider that, to all this world's state and pageantry we may truly say, 'Miserable comforters are ye all!' when the ostrich plume surmounts a racking brain, or diamonds sparkle over anguish at the heart.'"

Amidst all this happiness, our friends will suspect we were in a fair way of being spoilt, for prosperity is more trying than adversity; nor does anything betray the proud castle of the human heart as certainly as luxury and ease. If man is an "instrument of a thousand strings" it is not one "tuning" which will serve for a life.

Seven years had now passed at Elkerton. Mr. Horley had been three years dead, and a small estate of 500*l.* a-year had been added to our family purse. One more daughter had been added to the nursery, and one son. My sister, Fanny Bowyer—"Widow Bowsprit," as my father called her—our frequent visitor, observed on the first occasion, "Now I can really congratulate you on children born in a genteel and proper manner, where there's room to rock the cradle amidst all the comforts of Elkerton; but, really, your other children, Harry, as my poor Captain said, did seem smuggled into the world as such contraband little articles, that they were positively received with three cheers of groans all round the family."

This sister Fanny is a good managing mother. She kept on worrying the service to do something for "my boy Thomas," till the boy Thomas was as well known at the Admiralty as "the boy Jones" was at Buckingham Palace. Fanny's eldest girl is now leaving school, and the mother seems resolved, if talking can possibly effect it, to warn her against many things "which she would never do if her time were to come over again." So, many a woman has imagined, little reflecting that impulse and instinct ever will prove more than a match for sober reason.

I need hardly say, that all that crop of courtesies and attentions, which became so suddenly and so significantly abundant at Lachford, were by this time far more abundant than ever. We were now worth conciliating. To be on visiting terms with the Austins was worth talking of, and the more our intimacy at Norlands was exaggerated, the greater was the honour we were supposed to reflect.

We often said, our experience ought indeed to set compliments at their proper worth. But, if I honestly analyse our feelings, I am afraid we have felt pleased and hallucinated all the same; for, it is with flattery as it is with fortune-telling, however much we may be too wise to believe it, pleasant words leave a pleasurable sensation all the same.

Amongst others who now thought us worth conciliating was Mrs. Horley, and she took the best possible means of doing so. She readily concurred in a little exchange I proposed, and gave up the beautiful pearl sprig to Ellen; and Ellen had the pleasure of seeing her child sit on her lap and feel the pretty ornament with curious fingers, as she had done before with *her own* dear mother. Ellen was now disposed to look with more interest on the step-mother, though the little "attentions," added to the weekly basket, and, above all, the notice she took of her children, had previously made an impression.

And now the Widow Horley was "the best fun going." Her first was, as we have seen, a match of convenience: but, now that she had money, she thought she could pick and choose. But first, a year must pass—a most odious year, turning forty-nine (about) into half-a-hundred—in some countries they bury widows alive: Mrs. Horley complained that English customs, in one sense, did the same—but at the end of that time her weeds were quickly torn up by the roots. She was all hope and happiness at reaching the end of this cruel year: so much like a year of quarantine, while actually in the sight of a pleasant land.

Of course she had no want of suitors; but here was the difficulty:—Of old gentlemen she had had enough, and too much; and of that class of young men base enough to marry one nearly old enough for their mother, the real character was too easy to read, and one of the discarded had exclaimed in a billiard-room he could not carry on the farce with a serious face. Experience in wedlock made the lady very wary.

"One thing," said our widow, "I have found out in married life. If you do make an unlucky choice, there is a general conspiracy to keep you closely to your bargain. It is no use to complain; you are only laughed at. I really do believe people used to show extra attention to Mr. Horley when he was more than usually vexatious to me."

But at length Mrs. Horley received attentions she could not doubt. The Rev. Arthur Shark, a neat-looking little man of about thirty-five, quite a popular preacher in the town of Manton, began to say soft things to Widow Horley. The name of "Re-

verend," alone, I am proud to say, commands unbounded confidence, as regards credit of all kinds; but to be a popular preacher, too, lulled all suspicion. "Evangelical sound without evangelical sense,"* and that mystifying transcendentalism that I always suspect when I hear of a *fine* sermon—that is, something suspected to be very beautiful, but wherein its beauty consists the ecstatic congregation cannot tell—this was the secret of his profane success. Even his ignorance was an advantage to him, because "his nonsense suited their nonsense."

Certainly, if we were to work the problem, "Given the disgraceful nonsense of the preacher to find how foolish the people were," Mr. Shark's sermons would have demonstrated hundreds fit for Bedlam,—a remark too true of more than one congregation of popular preachers in my experience. No sooner did I hear the Rev. A. Shark, than I protested against such horrible pulpit theatricals,—for such it was, and the dramatic element was the whole charm. There was acting; there was a contagious excitement in tone and manner; there was occasional narrative of some penitent felon or dying smuggler, and other means of dramatic interest, besides awful denunciations as the principle of terror—called "strong doctrines"—in short, it was Sunday theatricals, or sacred melodrame.

Would that there were in this respect only one Rev. A. Shark! Would that men of purer intentions—men who would never deceive others had they not first deceived themselves—would that they always remembered that the true flock may be "a little flock," and that a congregation which disperses with sparkling eyes, and "Were n't you highly delighted, Mrs. Brown?" is a little more likely to praise the preacher than when he sends them away pricked to the heart with "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

This was one occasion on which I did feel that the preacher should be taken out of his pulpit and sent to the treadmill for profane babbling and imposture, and this I said plainly on my return home. "Yes, yes, Mr. Austin," said the widow, rather nettled, "'two of a trade can never agree:' let me see you draw such a congregation as Mr. Shark's, that's all."

Of course, my warnings were of no use to one who parried in this manner. Every hint—for hints there were, of his real character—was set down to jealousy, and turned to an evidence of his striking superiority. So, Mrs. Horley and the Rev. A. Shark were soon engaged to be married.

* See p. 209.

This, Mr. Shark announced most industriously at the earliest moment; nay, even before it was a fact, he had himself circulated the report at the town of Axfield, in which he had last been "known and trusted." My friend Edwards gave a certain tailor of Axfield a hint to apply for his bill. "Not yet," says Mr. Snip. "My bill is long enough to frighten a young maid, much more an experienced widow who knows what bills are. Let them just come out of church, and then I shall mark them down." More than one Axfield man would have told Mr. Shark's antecedents, but his former dupes were now his advocates, and begged for mercy and not to spoil the poor man's prospects by any precipitate demands.

The intended wedding was announced. But before the nuptial day it happened that supper, and grog after supper, enabled, as grog sometimes will, certain persons not doctors to "diagnose" the latent cause of a certain redness like that which, on and off, completed the picture of a blushing bridegroom in Mr. Shark. "He is a jolly fellow," said Mr. Sheepskin the attorney, who, being for one week a bachelor, had offered him a little refreshment after service, and ended with a cigar and a quiet glass down in the office.

For "men of the world," like Mr. Sheepskin, feel quite a relief when the lax practice of the parson seems to qualify the rigour of the pulpit. "He is up to snuff," said old Captain Burney, his churchwarden, with a very red nose, and three ill-favoured daughters, who looked upon every new curate as one chance more.

"Don't you agree with me, Mr. Sheepskin, that that widow had better come to you for a settlement?" Mr. Sheepskin said nothing: but he told me afterwards a writ from Axfield had been sent him to serve: but he added, "If lawyers told all they knew, society would be in a pretty state."

The end of all this was, that Mrs. Horley became indissolubly linked to a drunken, profligate character. She paid his debts till she was tired of it. She dreaded the jeers of society too much very readily to acknowledge her misery, though the worst of characters, even for swindling charity funds, followed him who was now her husband, wherever she went!

Then came the explanation. "Why, sir," said a tradesman to me, "this fellow is no regular-bred clergyman. He is one of our Bishop's Literates. He has never been to any college, and perhaps never was worth his father's spending any money on him. It is shameful of the Church to impose on society in this way. I never

lost a penny by trusting the clergy in my life. Place a man in your pulpit for one or two Sundays, and he may walk into any tradesman's shop and receive credit, as if by the Church's own introduction. We ask a reference with all other men. The loan of a pulpit, as we know the system of testimonials at each remove, is satisfaction enough. I don't approve of these Literates. *It is just like the system of ticket-of-leave convicts;* honest men are the sufferers"—(I quote the exact words)—"and I trust we shall have no more of them."

As to Literates, the system is full of danger. Who are the men most likely to apply? Men from five-and-twenty to five-and-thirty years of age, who either have had no profession, or who have succeeded in none; a class that comprises a large number of ne'er-do-wells and adventurers, whose friends are often—too often, I have observed—most unscrupulous in giving testimonials full of the virtues they wish them to have.

The title of Reverend in the family of a country tradesman is like a Peerage to us. We may well scrutinize the motive of the Minister, when the call is so tempting to the *Man.*

I have said enough (pp. 17, 75, and 97) to show how society is protected from unworthy ministers; but without the University degree there is no security.

An acquaintance of mine, in the diocese of Exeter, had persuaded a clergyman, well deserving of credit, to procure his ordination as a Literate. At the same time, to have two strings to his bow, he was canvassing for the office of Master of the Ceremonies at a fashionable town! The fear of the examination happily stopped him; but as to his testimonials, they would have been quite satisfactory!

Certainly I did know a case of a Literate an honour to the Church. But he had a profession, and was actually succeeding (as a solicitor) at the time he was ordained.

But how did this man ever obtain testimonials after his first disgrace? Let this be a caution to bishops and clergy. His testimonials could not have been signed by men who had an opportunity of knowing his conduct.

No bishop ought ever to receive or to countersign testimonials not signed by applicant's last rector, without particular inquiry. At this present date I could mention a man of the worst of characters, who, after his first disgrace, has held preferment in four several dioceses. In the third of these dioceses he was forbidden to officiate more. In this time he has been engaged to three different young ladies—no little household misery is involved in this

heartless case—all through laxity in giving testimonials—and twice arrested for debt: and from my experience I do believe, that there is little difficulty in any Mr. Shark abusing the honourable confidence reposed so generously by tradesmen, and so hospitably by the best Christian families, and passing from one curacy to another.

Even while writing I have heard of one more swindler in canonicals—all for want of inquiry on the part of his Rector—cruelly abusing the hospitality of a Christian family.

Such I now publicly declare to be the insufficiency of clerical testimonials. *Clerical testimonials are positively worse than none. For, while the most unworthy can command them, they prevent all such inquiry as might stop the career of a profligate.* Why take a curate with a stereotyped character, when you refuse a parlour-maid with a written one? I should suggest, besides particular inquiries, that a *Si quis*, or notice of each new appointment, should be required to be given at all preceding parishes for three years.

I earnestly exhort Rectors to consider that our high social position—our chief compensation—is endangered by all who introduce curates, especially Literates, without strict private inquiry. This can only prejudice the unworthy.

I must now draw my history to an end with one very important topic more.

Remember, my clerical friends, when I was a single man "without encumbrance"—such is the polite generic for a wife—I felt "unsettled,"—too unsettled, I thought, for my office.

Secondly. When I was married I lived in comfort, with our aunt's assistance; but here I was unsettled and distracted from other causes.

Thirdly. I removed into lodgings, and the loneliness of my dear wife, and my eagerness to return from my visiting to walk or keep her company—for she was too timid to move without me in that crowded house—this again broke in upon my time.

Fourthly. I experienced poverty in Pump Street, and daily anxiety about daily bread, with a sole charge in a large parish, my heart wrung with the poor I could not relieve, and my strength and spirits prostrate with duties beyond my power. Here, indeed, I was distracted, and my mind by no means settled.

And, lastly, He who was pleased to bring me down to the very dust, was mercifully pleased to raise me up; exchanging poverty for affluence, and virtually saying to me, "With a mighty hand and stretched-out arm I have brought thee out, and have led thee

into a land of milk and honey, *that thou shouldest serve me.*" And what, now, has been my experience in the ease and plenty of Elkerton?

I honestly confess, that to this day I have had my distractions, and have been unsettled still. The causes have changed, but our enemy is bent upon diversions, and the effect has been to some extent the same. Numerous visitors have beset my house. The influence of a man in my position is solicited by a class of persons who once would never have honoured me with a thought. I have three servants, a governess, a gardener, and a groom, who are all mortal as myself. Then wages must be paid, work marked out and scrutinised; and last, not least, the governess and the children are equally unable to go alone, and Ellen likes some little attention too.

My father has been two years dead; and what with lawyers and Doctors' Commons, and those interminable letters from Somerset House, with three trusteeships and relatives always in difficulties, Ellen says I ought to keep a secretary. Add to this, Mrs. Horley is "separated:" I am her trustee under the "mutual arrangement;" and this lady, "neither widow nor wife," whenever that high-pressure engine, called a violent temper, is well-nigh bursting; "for, of course, never was there a woman so tried before in this mortal world;" then a letter, crossed and recrossed, and requiring a return-of-post reply from her unhappy trustee, is her only resource and safety-valve for superfluous energies. Only last week she wanted to know as to the new Divorce Court, if she "could not 'take the benefit' of the 'Cat-and-Dog Act!'" So here, again, I have my distractions.

These family duties involve a loss in point of time, if duly discharged. On the other hand, if not discharged, to see my sisters and mother in distress were a loss in point of time, and distraction, too.

Now I will not dishonour the Church by saying that a minister has become corrupted by luxury, and has culpably given way to these trifles, as one to "mind earthly things." But I do point out that these are the thorns — most veritably the thorns — that tend to choke the seed, and that the greatest self-searching and vigilance are required, lest "after preaching to others I myself should be a castaway;" and my full conviction is, that — *a very great part of a minister's probation in this life is to contend with temptations to irregularity, delay, and eventual neglect of duty — temptations very violent in poverty, but very trying and insidious in "the comforts and quietude of an English parsonage.*"

Such, then, are the diversions and distractions that beset the pastoral path of the Rev. Henry Austin of Elkerton. He does try to steer his course safely between the rocks and shoals that surround him, but never without a painful sense of his own shortcomings, and not without fear and trembling, too; and he does emphatically warn all young clergymen, — that the idea of being settled and free from distractions in the path of duty, is a vain dream and expectation — that the quiet little retreat imagination pictures, wherever the distant spire rises above some lofty elms, is not too quiet to have cares and anxieties peculiarly its own — and that we all must strive manfully against those little ties and greater hindrances from which, in some form or other, we never can be free. And, as to looking for a more convenient season, and waiting till we are "settled," to perform our several parts in this life, it is like waiting till the river shall have passed away, for a man never is "settled" in this world till he is settled at the bottom of his grave.

THE END.

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New Edition.

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1862.

PREFACE.

THE Reverend Henry Austin is not set forth as a Model Rector; for, since virtue in black coats has many of the same difficulties as virtue in brown, and some of its own besides, I might have looked in vain for any one sufficiently pure and passionless to sit for the picture.

Besides, a model Rector would be as little likely to be interesting as a model farm to be picturesque.

I am also of opinion that, by debiting the clergy with super-*lay*man perfections, we simply encourage the error of those who, because they find their Minister not quite equal to an angel, can never appreciate his goodness as a man.

The characters and incidents of this history are substantially true. The reader should have the full satisfaction of knowing that no single scene, wholly fictitious, will beguile him either of his pity or his pence: though I am not sure that, out of the many members of the Austin family in the Parsonage-houses of England, I may not have set down certain things to Henry

which more strictly belonged to his brother Thomas or his cousin John.

It is easy to tell a good story, if you have not more conscience than to invent as you go. But, as to a simple narrative of real occurrences, that this should abound in surprise and dramatic positions—just as if any throat could be cut or heart broken at the convenience of the writer—it were indeed hardly fair to expect. Still, "truth is stranger than fiction:" and I venture to hope that, while the plain stamp of reality will add much to the interest of the following pages, the fate and fortunes of Henry Austin, his friends and family, may be not without an interest peculiarly their own.

J. P.

May 10*th*, 1860.
Bathwick Hill, Bath.

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ELKERTON RECTORY.

CHAPTER I.

HOW ALL ELKERTON IS QUITE ALIVE BECAUSE THEIR RECTOR IS ALMOST DEAD—AN ANIMATED CONTEST, IN WHICH AN OUT-SIDER WINS.

THERE is a popular belief that when "pale death," as Horace says, thinks it his turn to knock at some rich man's door, the raven flaps her wings over the chimney-top, the screech-owl utters her lugubrious wail, the coffin flies out upon the hearth-rug, or the winding-sheet startles the maid with her long-snuffed candle.

I have no sympathy with any one who would reason the kitchen out of all its tales of dismal horror, or disenchant the nursery of its fairy visions. This world without its fancies would be bleak and cold as a landscape without the sun. And when Providence has been pleased to gild the gingerbread of life, I have no patience with the man who would scrape it off again. I am myself a firm believer that certain signs—though rather different in kind—do prognosticate man's coming doom. Sometimes a general practitioner calls in a physician or holds a consultation—that is, over the state of the weather or the winner of the Derby, it being nine times out of ten clear as noon-day, that, though they always change the medicine for appearances, it were waste of words to talk of so hopeless a case. Sometimes a lawyer is seen, quite a stranger in the place, or relations never heard of before drop as from the clouds to astonish the neighbours. And almost always the garden runs wild, the gates are left open, the servants are standing about, and every one who comes to the door—from the boy in buttons with his master's compliments, to the baker or the

butcher's man—has a pretty good talk before he goes away again.

Now, I am so far superstitious as to believe in such signs and omens as these, and probably not one of these signs was wanting at the time that the following conversation took place at the Rectory of Elkerton:—

"Then our parson really is a-dying!" said Grace Carter; "not much more work shall I do for him. And he won't be so long after my lady, will he be, Mrs. Bromley?"

"Not quite two years," replied the housekeeper, sorrowfully. "But it is a fine quantity of work that you have had, let who will wash for the next Rector."

"In my lady's time, I grant you that I had, Mrs. Bromley. Yes, she was a proper lady; every article of the finest and the best—eleven slips in one week in gardening time, I've known her send—nice work, sure-ly, hers was!—besides all the broken victuals, and——"

"Yes, and victuals not broken too, and stuff for real coughs and sham coughs, and strong soup for that lazy, deceitful girl, and brandy to rub in—though precious little rubbing, I'll warrant you—and coals and tickets for grits, and tea, and sugar, and starch—and ——. Yes, Grace, you have had a nice time of it, certainly."

"No, Mrs. Bromley, not half as much as other people, I haven't had. Why, Giles Wilkes's leg would have been tied up to this time, if our Doctor hadn't spied him out at Manton revel that night at twelve o'clock; and Hannah Jones, after her second child, was as well able to come washing again as the rest of us: but, if she could lie a-bed souped and caudled, and made much of for seven weeks——"

"You think you had a right to impose upon the parson, too, do you? Well, all I can say is, that sorry as I am to lose master, 'tis some comfort to think you won't find another such a gentleman to trifle with; so, fewer lies and faster work must be the way of Elkerton folk now, or else you will all be into the Union in no time at all."

"What! and isn't there any chance at all for poor master?" asked Grace, in a somewhat sadder tone.

"No, and no more *chances* for you neither—master is too far gone for that. Doctors can't give people new insides any more than we can, Grace. But here comes Doctor Seymour; though we shan't see him this way, for he's talking to Parson Williams. Ah! no matter to you, Mr. Williams: for, live or die, poor master!

—it will be all the same to you, as far as your chance of Elkerton Rectory goes.—I could tell Mr. Williams that, Grace."

"We poor folk shouldn't get much out of Mr. Williams, if he should be Rector; should we, Mrs. Bromley?"

"Not such as you wouldn't, Grace; you may be quite sure of that. For he is up to all of you. No man knows our people better than he does. He's up to all your ways and wickedness. But you know well enough that, if such things went by merit, there is never a better man all the country round. For, day after day, wet or fine, rain, wind, or snow, there's Parson Williams — reading, reading, praying, praying, and doing the true Gospel-work somewhere."

"And ain't such faithful servants to have their reward, Mrs. Bromley?"

"The reward of a good conscience he might have, no doubt, as much as any gentleman; but there, you know, we can all have rewards like that: but all I have to say is, that Mr. Williams's reward won't be to be parson of Elkerton."

"That's just what we were saying, all of us, down at shop this very morning," replied the washerwoman, very eagerly; "and Molly Fooks was of the same mind with me; and, says she, 'Muster Williams is a pious sort o' minister, but he ain't a regular-bred gem'man to do for Elkerton.' "

—This only one of many proofs, that if there is a blot on a man's escutcheon, every pauper in a parish, as well as every soldier in a regiment, is sure to hit it as regards those set in authority over him.—

"You are quite right there," said Mrs. Bromley. "Mr. Williams is the wrong sort; he is more of the Methody than a proper parson, isn't he? Why, his father was only Squire Clifden's bailiff."

"Yes," said Grace, "and he isn't like one of the gentry here; and then he didn't marry a proper lady for dinner-parties and the like of that."

"And that's why all the parish thinks I shan't have to serve Parson Williams at the Rectory, is it?" said the housekeeper, anxiously.

"Yes. That's just what all the parish says. Why, none of the gentry seems to make way for Muster Williams, or to think much of him," replied Grace.

"And you wouldn't wish it yourself, Grace, would you? Now, tell us the honest truth."

"Why, you see, Mrs. Bromley, Parson Williams ain't no good

to anybody. His are very good sermons—very good doctrine, and all that; but I mean, that o' week-days Parson Williams isn't a bit of good to any one. Suppose a poor body wants a word at the Board (of Guardians), or a bit of a note when up before the Justice—Why, Thomas Reed had three months on the treadmill about those bags o' taters, and Sally and all the children on the parish till Thomas was out—all the same that Parson Williams was there and spoke up for him. The Justices don't mind such as him."

"Very true," said Mrs. Bromley; "the pity was my master wasn't about—the beginning of his illness that was. 'Why didn't Farmer Cave look sharper after his potatoes?' said master to me. Ah! he was the gentleman to settle things without any justices, was my poor master,—more's the pity his race is run. It wants a pretty stiffish Rector here—not to let the squires and farmers ride rough-shod over all the parish—we all know that—many's the time—don't we, Grace?"

From this conversation my reader will readily collect, first, that a certain Rector was dying, leaving a parish in a state to draw heavily on the finances of his successor; and secondly, that his curate, among others, was indulging delusive hopes of the Living.

The said curate—the Rev. George Williams—was one of the least likely of men to obtain anything in the Church, because he had nothing but pure merit to recommend him: and, all persons who have anything to give away, either in Church or State, invariably stipulate for at least an interesting object. And in so saying, I mean no kind of reflection on the Church. Mr. Williams would have been equally unsuccessful in any other struggle for preferment which lay at the disposal of any mortal Chancellor or mortal Bishop.

I once heard a cab-master say, that a certain driver, with the best horse and best cab on the stand, would see every tumble-down horse and shabby rattle-trap go off first, simply because he had not the tact to look a little lively and see, by a gentleman's look, that he wanted a cab, almost before he felt the want of one himself.

This exemplifies a great deal in this world. Mr. Williams had nothing to recommend him but good, sober, sensible, working qualities, and plain, unpretending goodness. He was the last man to blow his own trumpet, and he had no powerful connexions to blow his trumpet for him. And so long as professed beggars

will win more pity, as well as pence, than the reduced gentlewoman cowering in her rags, so long will the George Williamses require a very rare kind of patrons to single them out.

This particular Mr. Williams was singularly unfortunate in his claims on the attention of patrons, who had anything to give away.

He was not, like the brilliant Mr. Shipley, who carried everything by storm—a man whom it was self-complimentary to talk of, and who seemed to every one to reflect credit on his admirers as well as on himself.

Neither was he like the dull Mr. Ewens, actually preferred to the perpetual curacy of F—— for his dullness. For the Hall and the Rectory stood, the Hall on the north side of my favourite trout stream, and the Rectory on the south; and old General Hayley, after astonishing an under-master of the neighbouring grammar-school with the Living, made no secret of the fact that he was not going to have the wind taken out of his sails by any one as sharp and clever as my friend R——, whom all the county would have desired to see over them.

Again, Mr. Williams was too old to marry a patron's daughter: yet not old enough to act warming-pan till some minor came of age.

He was not so poor as to be preferred from charity: and not half rich enough to keep open house for the squires around.

"There is nothing interesting about the man," said Sir Edward Marwood; "really, the country were hardly worth living in with such a slow-coach as that."

He had not the talent (most happily) to make a small collection of his bishop's favourite crotchets, and then to give his lordship back his own opinions in a pamphlet *à propos* to something else.

And since Mr. Williams also invariably grieved over certain "politics" akin to "knavish tricks," and cast a very chilly look on every candidate who asked him for his influence with a drunken knot of freemen whom we shall mention presently, both the Chancellor and the Bishop might have lived and died without rewarding, because without hearing of, such a man as the Rev. George Williams.

But all this time poor Williams—as he afterwards told me—was calculating his chance of the Rectory, on data which a moment's reflection should have told him were far enough from actuating those on whose influence it depended. Who cared for "his long service as curate till past fifty?"—people always like something fresh. Who cared about his "being already used to

the people, and the people to him?"—it is the man, and not the minister, who would win by any popular election.

If sanguine expectants, like Mr. Williams, would cease to reason from their own views and motives, and would throw themselves a little into the character of the other party, and see the matter as from his point of view, and not their own, it would save a world of disappointment and vexation.

Still, while every one we meet says, "Surely it must be our turn to congratulate you this time, Mr. Williams;" "There cannot be a doubt you will move into the Rectory now?" these pretty speeches will raise hopes even in the wisest of men, though meaning no more than "Yours very sincerely," "Always welcome," and other stereotyped insincerities of the day.

"But, there are plenty of persons after master's place," said the housekeeper, "as well as our curate."

"Why, how did you hear that, Mrs. Bromley?"

"Hear it, indeed! I don't always hear things—most times I see things, and don't want to hear them. While gentlefolk think I am listening to their speeches, I am all the time looking into their faces and watching their looks out of the corners of their eyes, and the like of that, and I believe just as much of one as I see in the other."

"And, maybe, you have had ever so many calls from parsons, or from parsons' friends? Oh, well, any one can have sense enough to see when a body is a peering after a sitivation. Can't they, Mrs. Bromley?"

"If you'll believe me, Grace, it is as good as a play to see them. First comes Mr. Horton, of Horton Hall, all so great, and says, 'How's my old friend?' 'Is there no kind of hope for him?' Then he looks about, and says, 'A pleasant, healthy place;' 'Not damp, is it, housekeeper?' So then, thinks I, you want Elkerton for young Mr. Airey, who married your daughter."

"Then, why couldn't Mr. Knowles—he that was curate of Hayton—make his 'kind inquiries,' but he must needs want to walk round the premises? And as to Squire Shirley—his son's a parson—you would have thought he was a bailiff, or an auctioneer at the least, taking a valuation of all the house, and stock, and everything."

"Now, you do make me laugh, Mrs. Bromley," said Grace; "but gentlefolk, you see, are hungry after places, just like poor folk."

"Yes, and it's just as if poor master had got his month's

warning, and every one was wanting to be in before he's well out. Ionly wish master could do what he told me old Parson Beresford" (author of the *Miseries of Human Life*), "did, just to match them."

"And what was that, Mrs. Bromley?"

"Why, get well again—that's what he did. His was a living belonging to the College gentlemen" (Merton College, Oxford), "and seeing some of them spying about his premises, he put his head out of the window and said, 'Walk in, gentlemen, walk in. I'll do anything to oblige you except one—Doctor says I'm growing quite well and hearty; you'll be so glad to hear it.'"

It will easily be collected from this little conversation that all Elkerton was in a state of hope and excitement; or, as some one said, the parish was all alive, simply because the Rector was all but dead. "Little else is talked of," said the Doctor, "within miles around, but 'Who is to have Elkerton?'" For in the Church, as in the State, the canvass begins at the earliest possible news of "an approaching dissolution."

Among other substantial family men in these parts, who had a house and shrubbery, and a little land—enough for a cow, some pigs, and a few geese, to take an airing in—was Uncle Ben, the lawyer; and Uncle Ben's landed estate was quite a joke among the lords of many acres, that seemed to squeeze him into nothingness. But Uncle Ben was a man of ready money, and of ready wit, and used to say that he could enter a very respectable appearance on the county map, if he were such a goose as to mortgage one field to buy another, like some people. But "Benjamin Austin, Esq.," though regarded only as a county man by courtesy, passing his idle time still at his small office in the small borough of Manton, was too good a neighbour, and far too influential among the witless, sleepy preservers of pheasants and growers of swedes, to be at all shaky in his late-in-life county position.

Uncle Ben was a warm friend and a good neighbour, and partly from good nature and partly for something to do, he would write more letters, and travel more miles, to help a friend at a pinch, than all the parish put together. Of course he could stand a deal of abuse, and laugh ill-humour away, and was quite one of the "pachydermatous," or thick-skinned animals; otherwise, the gnats and wasps of society would have been more than he could have dared to provoke. The only weakness which qualified Uncle Ben's disinterested philanthropy was, that he must always get a joke out of everything.

Accordingly, Uncle Ben entered as heartily as any one into the excitement about Elkerton; or rather, seemed to enter. No one had a nicer sense of the ridiculous, and no one could more ingeniously throw out a feeler, just to see which way the land lay, than Uncle Ben. "So," said he, "while calling at the Hall one morning, I thought I would just fathom Mrs. Horton's hopes and fears for her son-in-law's chance of the Rectory, so I quietly let drop, 'They do say there are some hopes of the Rector. He may pull through this attack: and, some say, it is very likely that he will, Mrs. Horton.'"

"Never!" said the lady, with an emphasis, dropping her crochet as at the death-warrant of all her aspirations. "Recovery is impossible; quite impossible. I know it is. I wonder how people can imagine such a thing,"—and on she went knitting and jerking away so snappishly, that Uncle Ben thought he had better say no more on so unpopular a subject as that.

And so it had come to pass that Elkerton caused all the excitement of a lottery, in which every one held a ticket for self or friend—that friend being seldom further off than some joint of the family tail. A dozen were soon entered for the race, and every one had a favourite. To hint that the Rector would recover, was downright ill-breeding; and, to doubt the commanding interest of a certain family was to be insufferably disagreeable; and Uncle Ben lost ground sadly about that time.

It is no exaggeration to say that fifty people, at least, young and old, ladies as well as gentlemen, and laity as well clergy, kept calculating and castle-building all about the Rectory at Elkerton.

Many a young curate thought,—Well, if I should be so lucky! —and yet Knight of Eversfield had no more interest with the Government than I have now. And then that *vacuum* by clerical nature most abhorred—that chair to be occupied by the fire-side —that yearning of the heart and no one to clasp there, would soon be filled, and those college duns as soon paid off! And one, at least, of my acquaintance had been steadied through life by a careworn mother and two notable sisters, who, toil as much as they would, could barely support one maid and appearances, by drawing and fancy card-work, to be sold at a distance for "distressed ladies," and sold by one who always forgot to hint they were his own kith and kin;—and where is the heart that does not feel for one who says, "How happy should I be to cry, A truce to crochet and to cross-stitch, and to bid them move their worn and shaky furniture, and their no less worn and shaky selves, and to find

rest for their *bones* (for they were little else), in a parsonage of my own proper earning?"

However, from one motive or another, every one, high and low, rich and poor, was in a state of hope, curiosity, or other exciting affection of the mind, as to "who was to have Elkerton."

Doctor Seymour said, "I am as much concerned as any one can be in the appointment, though I say least about it. One country-house with another ought to be worth twenty pounds a-year to me; but as to a quiet parson and his wife, if there should happen to be no young children, the house might as well be empty; for, what with early hours, two-o'clock dinners, and 'Graham's domestic medicine,' they stop or stave off mere coughs and colics of themselves; and as to fevers and inflammation, they wouldn't find a country practitioner in bread and cheese."

Persons who are not used to live in the country may think that all this excitement about a Chancellor's living is exaggerated. But, where there are only seven or eight houses within dinner-party distances, and when half even of these, on an average, are tenanted by the shelved or superannuated—for, all persons who have not outlived their activities and energies hurry off to London or the Continent no small part of the year, leaving a stagnant residue of the dull and disagreeable behind—why then, the Rectory-house is regarded as at least a likely place to afford a family rather more social and sensible, as typified by the neat parlour-maid who opens the door, than where you are met by the "pampered menial," who too often represents the lazy pacing hours and the drawling monotony at the Hall.

And why should I be thought unkind if I said that "the new Rector," and even "the new Curate," where there is a family of grown-up daughters, can be no matter of indifference in this world?

Far be it from me, my fair sisters, to enter the shrine of your most sacred thoughts, to divest them of their maiden veil, and to drag them ruthlessly to the staring light of day. No. There is a beautiful sentiment, which is as much part of the pure mind of an English lady, as the atmosphere is part of the landscape which it mellows. Still, why need we disguise that, though some few ladies may be compared to the standard rose, diffusing unsupported its beauty and fragrance to all around, yet many there are who—especially if they have no aged parents at once to exercise their tenderness and to sanctify their love—will early droop and fade, with all their charms lost in life's garden, if they find not some natural support to embrace and adorn!

Now, if the dear innocent creatures do not know what Milton calls "this strange defect in nature" themselves, their mothers know it for them. Mothers? Yes; and their fathers, too, are often painfully aware, that their style and establishment is but as one huge bubble, and one which, the bigger it swells, the nearer to bursting; and that, though sons may earn a livelihood for themselves, yet it is a sad thing for any man to think of daughters stretched on the strand of this rude world; and then, when such thoughts intrude, what a port in a storm must seem a Rectory like Elkerton!

This will be enough to explain, as connected with this prize in the lottery—this good fortune that "must fall to some one, so why should it not fall to us?"—the feelings that made Elkerton pulses a little quick. But there were feelings of another kind no less on the alert. Lady Newcome and daughters only hoped it would be an Evangelical: the High-Church sentiments of the last Rector having imposed upon them rather a strange duty in the parish; for they used to go from house to house, sometimes with tracts against Regeneration by Baptism, and sometimes with tracts depreciating good works, till the poor creatures thought that being Registered was as good as being Christened, and that truth and honest dealing were quite of secondary importance.

For, there was the usual quantity of sentimental religion in these parts. Where science prevails in society, almost every one pretends to a little fondness for fossils, or proposes a tea-party to look at the comet, or to talk of the eclipse. Where pictures or works of art are in the ascendant, no one can make way without some smattering about the ancient masters. What stands for religion is sometimes no deeper. "You tell me," said a sensible friend of mine, "that the Newcome party are Evangelical, and the Elmore party are High Church; but are either of them Christians?" A very necessary inquiry, indeed, for the reality of the one by no means follows from the name of the other. Such Churchmen and such Evangelicals we too often meet, and such persons are the greatest trouble a clergyman can encounter. Such were Lady Newcome and family. It was Lady Newcome who invited "the deputation" and his carpet-bag. It was Lady Newcome who answered to "that fat lady"—for anybody was sure to ask—"with the excited countenance close under the platform." It was Lady Newcome who would make several other parties, who were as worldly as herself, look either encouraging or depreciating on every new minister who appeared at Elkerton. And it was Lady Newcome who was first at the vestry-room if anything seemed

wrong, with all kinds of delicate attentions, ready to send her maid for either sal-volatile or brandy. It was her Ladyship, too, who, in place of cheers and applause, could give the cue to that peculiar rustling of gowns and gathers which reckons as "sensation" in any excited assembly.

No wonder, therefore, that from the time the aged Rector's case was pronounced serious, Lady Newcome and family were among the first to seal his doom, and to augur whom "they should have the privilege of having," or whom "it would be a perfect misfortune to have," at Elkerton. In short, Lady Newcome was one of our lady-bishops, a kind of Pope Joan; and without assuring my readers that in these pages I really do frequently pass over facts because stranger than fiction, I should be afraid to say that—when something was not to her liking, I have known her stay away from Church *out of principle!*

Such was the excitement produced by this as by many another vacant Living. Had Elkerton been open to canvass, like the Rectory of Crediton, near Exeter, where the Bishop interfered to stop a series of trial sermons before lay-judges; or like the Living of D——, where public-houses were thrown open by the partizans of the respective candidates, and poor S—— came in victorious only to encounter envy, malice, and all uncharitableness, with Chancery proceedings *in terrorem*—why then, even the fabled animosity of the Kilkenny cats would alone have represented the internecine war that would have ensued!

Farmer Whateman, who carried a good honest heart under his fustian coat and waistcoat, had, with the help of his brother-churchwarden and a land-surveyor's clerk, concocted a petition in favour, as he said, of "Parson Williams biding where he was," or being settled as their Rector. And we can all sympathise with their innocent satisfaction as they carried the same for signature to Horton Hall. They did not find the Squire at home, but they did find his lady. "We hope we have done nothing to offend," said our worthy friends, "but she did speak up so cross and snappish, we were glad to come away again double-quick time."

And there was a good reason why—the Lord Chancellor, we know, had the appointment; and this high dignitary, as late Serjeant Winham, had canvassed the borough of Tipton with the help of Mr. Horton, however much he might have forgotten this name of Horton among so many canvassers in that and other places. "Among the Persians," says Herodotus, "the king kept a book to enroll the names of those who had ever done him a good turn, that it might be duly repaid some other day." Had a man

like Serjeant Winham done the same, even the *London Directory* would hardly have held the names of those who, in their own estimation at least, had a claim upon his patronage.

One day Mr. Horton went out to have a talk with his friends, as to the mildest form in which he could remind the Chancellor how his carriage had brought voters to the poll at a certain Cranstock election; for, rich men are not at all above a little bribery, if paid by preferment, however superior to pelf. But Mr. Horton came back in not the best of humours; for nearly every one he encountered betrayed a guilty consciousness that he was playing the same game.

The truth is, the Chancellor was being attacked on all sides. He was like a spider in the middle of his web—all the converging threads aptly representing the trains that were laid to reach him from every point of one wide circle.

But I must not forget to mention rather a good thing that Uncle Ben said to Colonel Kent. Colonel Kent was a director of the Catchall Railway, and spoke of bringing his railway interest to bear; for, the Chairman, the Secretary, the Engineer, had all many ways of reaching members both of the Lords and Commons:—"Well, Colonel," said Uncle Ben, "I call you a model director, certainly, and I do sincerely hope you may succeed; because, after so conciliating a favour received, two or three branch lines and a triumphal arch or so is the least return you can make in committee to your obliging friends."

There is something very like life in the *Vicar of Wakefield*, where Mrs. Primrose, sitting by as the two fine ladies from London are talking of the situations vacant in their respective establishments, takes fire at the thought of so much good money going clean out of the family, when a word on her own behalf might save it. Everybody in Elkerton felt like Mrs. Primrose; and so prevalent was this feeling, and so truly engrossing the subject at every party and every morning call for three weeks, that, "at last," said the Doctor, "the story became quite nauseating and a weakness, and people began to feel ashamed of the same everlasting topic of conversation."

It was about this time, when so many were in the field before me, that my letter to Lady Oxton was forwarded to the Lord Chancellor, with a very earnest request from her Ladyship that the Rectory might be given to "her friend, the Rev. Henry Austin, once the faithful tutor of her son Reginald."

His Lordship, it is true, was in the vale of years. Still, there is a kind of romance for which a man never grows too old; and

we may say of many an old gentleman, as regards the admiration of his youth —

"E'en in their ashes live their wonted fires;"

and the wisest of men — being as weak almost as the weakest, save that they have longer lucid intervals — from the days of Cleopatra downwards, have given a great deal for the pleasure of looking forward to that insidious flattery which sparkles in the eye or thrills from the electric fingers of a lady fair, when pleased in some object on which she has set her heart.

Still, as the Rector yet lingered on, my promised appointment was a secret. But what kind of secret is that which is already known to ten persons, at least, in different families, and Uncle Ben one of the number? For, Uncle Ben did dearly love a joke, and a piece of news to turn the tables on the whole company would well-nigh burn its way through his waistcoat.

What made the secret all the harder for Uncle Ben to keep was, that the chief county people had by this time talked themselves into a persuasion that the landed interest must carry everything, and that one of the families of many acres must have Elkerton; and the only question was — Which? And when Uncle Ben entered, as he did from sheer mischief, into the animated debate, they contrived to make him feel that he not being county "proper," could have no possible concern in the matter. We cannot therefore be surprised that one day, when the death of the Rector had been announced, Uncle Ben drily suggested that the contest for Elkerton might, after all, turn out to be like a book for the "Derby," where, after the most ingenious calculation about the favourites, an "out-sider" would be so vexatious as to win in a canter.

"Why, really," replied Mr. Horton, somewhat nettled, "to hear you talk, Austin, one would think that a thousand acres or so went for nothing in this part of the county! Now," he said, turning round on the hearthrug in Mrs. Elmore's drawing-room, "I can plainly see, ladies and gentlemen, some favoured friend of Mr. Austin is going to beat us all."

"This piece of banter," said Uncle, "was followed by a laugh all round, at the end of which I said, with all the emphasis I could command, 'More unlikely things have happened, Mr. Horton, than that.'"

The secret was now all but out. It only remained to put one and one together, and to find a few corroborative facts. Uncle

Ben, to whose office all the county went for advice, was deemed a kind of conjurer among them. There was no knowing how far a keen electioneering agent as he was might not come round any of them. And when it was further understood that Ellen and I, for the first time since our marriage, were at this very critical season both at Bowdon Hall, and also that the Austins and the Horleys seemed quite friendly and well-pleased with each other— no bad sign that money-matters were rather easier — by degrees the unwelcome belief stole upon them that Uncle Ben had been for some days enjoying a smothered joke, and inwardly chuckling over the improved fortunes of his brother's family, and that the Lord Chancellor had thrown over all his old supporters, and shown a base Radical indifference to the feelings of the landed interest, by actually putting so humble an individual as Henry Austin into the Rectory of Elkerton.

CHAPTER II.

WE GO TO SEE THE PARSONAGE-HOUSE AND PARISH OF ELKERTON — WE SET OUT FULL OF HOPES, AND WE COME HOME WITH SUNDRY QUALMS AND FEARS.

EVERYBODY talks of friends being appointed to livings, and not a few may be curious to hear the precise manner in which this envied position is conferred.

In my own case it was as follows: — No sooner was the demise of the Rev. Edward Pratt duly notified than I received a letter to this effect: — "Lord Wansdale presents his compliments to the Rev. Henry Austin, and has the satisfaction of informing him that it is Lord Wansdale's intention to present him to the Rectory of Elkerton."

After writing this note, his lordship, I presume, handed my name and address to his preferment secretary, who immediately communicated with the well-known Mr. Burder. From Mr. Burder I had a letter to say, that if I would apply to the secretary of the Bishop of L—— I should find that the necessary instrument was at his command.

Hodgson's *Instructions to the Clergy* is a kind of *Murray's Guide* to the Church; and under the head of "What to do when nominated to a benefice," I readily learnt how to send in my papers, and a day was soon after appointed for making the usual oaths and subscriptions at a certain office in the Cloisters of ——.

My appointment was next ecclesiastically gazetted, and went the round of all the daily papers: and one county paper contained a complimentary paragraph, calling attention to the excellence of the choice that was made. One began with, "Our readers will be happy to hear;" and another delicately hinted that the choice had fallen "On a nephew of Benjamin Austin, Esq., whose *electioneering* tactics had, as usual, distanced all the field." Uncle Ben, though he had no more to do with the matter than the Man

in the Moon, was not at all desirous of undeceiving his neighbours on this point.

It is wonderful how long — so constituted is man to be tickled by a straw — the same piece of pleasure may be made to go. It is not only the essence but the accidents of the matter that all help to amuse the mind. And so, to read in the *Gazette*, among a dozen notices of preferment —

> "The Rev. H. Austin to the Rectory of Elkerton — Patron, the Lord Chancellor;"

— to read this once might be supposed enough, and that was what my father said; for, he was the most matter-of-fact man in the world; but as to Ellen and my sisters, and my mother more than any of us — I will say nothing about myself — they searched every newspaper which came in to see if the same notice was not there. Neither did we soon cease talking of it. "I wonder what Mrs. Vine will say now," observed Ellen; "and certain others who were so supercilious in our early struggles." "Yes," said my mother, "and in the midst of all your troubles, it was most painful to me even to meet the Hills and the Thurleys; indeed, the Bowdon people are the most jealous and envious possible: but they will have to leave off their false and ill-natured inquiries, now that they are sure to hear something pleasant."

And soon the post-bag began to teem with letters. Some few came from old friends: but the greater part were from that peculiar class of tradesmen whose clerks have apparently nothing to do but to copy directions from the *Clergy List*. From the nature of these applications, they evidently expected to find me rather bare of the superfluities, if not of the necessaries of life.

Some offered gowns and surplices and sacramental linen, and others church upholstery, so correct in design that every seat and kneeling-stool should do its very best to make a Protestant church correspond as exactly as possible with the popular idea of a Roman Catholic chapel. Clerical tailors also assured me, in effect, that they understood the correct Anglo-Catholic cut, and would make me as much like an Irish priest as I could desire. Besides these obliging offers, I had letters from grocers offering charity tea; and letters from drapers, who evidently thought that providing all the old women with blankets and flannel petticoats was a principal article in the ordination vow. As to the wine-merchants, it is incredible how they pester the clergy to buy cheap wine. Clerical Insurance Offices also implied that I was leading a peaceable and

sober kind of life, and I might provide for my family at a lower premium than common mortals.

As soon as the Rector was buried, I paid a visit to Elkerton, and found a large map of the parish somewhat the worse for wear: for, every one had put his thumb on one spot—of course, the Parsonage. This map was hung up in the passage, enabling me at once to survey the bounds of my domain, though it was not till I had a pretty good lesson in Uncle Ben's office that I could make out all the rents as well as charges of my benefice, and strike a balance of profit between them.

Uncle Ben particularly cautioned me not to call myself richer than I really was. "You can net," said he, "420*l.* a-year, besides the house. You had better say 400*l.*, and allow the odd 20*l.* for dilapidations."

The parish of Elkerton was nine miles by lanes and bridle-paths, but nearly eleven by the road, with a coach going and returning daily from Bowdon and my father's home—my mother's home, indeed, I ought to say; for it was my mother whose good-comforting, warming, dinner-ordering, fireside-nestling spirit sent one genial glow from the kitchen to the gable-ends. Indispensable as the male bird may be to bring in the flies and berries, it is the brooding hen that Imagination more fondly pictures, as she spreads her wings over the nest.

On my return, I did all I could to convey some idea of our future abode; dwelling naturally rather more on all that was most pleasant to tell. But, soon the time had come for all to turn their fancies into facts, and to see with their own eyes the happy home of Elkerton.

Mr. Horley offered to lend his carriage; but that would not carry all. There was mother one, Ellen two, my daughter Alice three,—she was seven years old, and as eager as any one on the occasion—and my sister Emily four. But who would make way for my father? "Oh! never mind me," he said; "any time will do for me to see it." This seemed strange want of interest to me at the time; but I know now how age and the cares of life take the sanguine humour out of any family man. Ellen would have gone days before; but she had a natural delicacy of appearing too soon after the poor old Rector was carried from the Parsonage-house to the silent tomb.

I shall never forget the morning we all set out to see the extent of our possessions and the reality of our happy visions. My dear wife seemed very nervous. This was partly from her reduced state of health; but that was not the only cause. She

was just now beginning, sorrow-taught, to distrust all great changes, and all fresh starts and setting out anew in the journey of life. Ellen had by this time learnt what life really was. "For," she said, "first of all, marriage was to forbid the heart evermore to ache; next, independence was to make the crooked straight; and then, a house of our own, instead of lodgings, was to render all smooth and pleasant. So really, Henry, we have found this hopeful future a sad deceiver; making the most of all the joys, but blinding our eyes to all the trials, from which, in one form or another, I now see it is ordained we can never long be free."

This remark seems very natural to any sober mind: so true is it, that humility and dependence on some Allwise Being, who knows what is good for us, and not we ourselves, proves a lesson plainly writ, not only in the pages of Scripture, but also in the pages of life!

A late traveller in Petræa has found writings, supposed to be records of the journeyings of the Israelites, graven on the rocks. If all wanderers in the desert of this world could have written their annals too, how instructive were the lesson!

And Ellen felt that this was one more voyage. She was launching again on the vast unknown, the pathless ocean of this life; and she more and more began to feel, as I did, how little we could tell — whether at Elkerton or elsewhere in this mortal world — what one single hour might bring forth. It is at such moments that minds really religious begin insensibly to recognise in the Word of God the chart and compass for this world's mariner. It is at such moments that many a holy text revolves in the memory, fading and returning with the cycle of our feelings. Such eternal truths seem as the mysterious planets, the safest guide to him who heeds them; but still, whether we will hear or whether we will forbear, on they move in their celestial course, as silent witnesses of the wreck or the rescue of blind and thoughtless man.

As the carriage cleared the last turnpike-gate we all used our eyes to make observations, with more curiosity by far than we had ever experienced before in that village, though we had occasionally driven through it.

"Well, there is a good butcher's shop, and a small chandler's," said Ellen.

"Yes," said my mother, "and not far to the doctor's. Mr. Seymour is the name. I remember hearing of Mr. Seymour; he is reckoned a very clever man, and has a beautiful magic lantern. But I do so hope he understands the complaints of children. Half

the doctors don't. I would rather trust any old nurse than many of them."

"Mr. Seymour is a married man, is he not?" asked Ellen.

"There is not the least good in that," replied mother, "unless he has some children of his own, and some sickly ones, too, to teach him what a nursery really is."

Just then the carriage drew up almost to a walk.

"What is the matter?" asked Emily. "Is it a waggon that stops the road?"

"No; indeed it is not," said my mother. "It is a funeral: yes, and white hatbands: so it is a young woman's funeral, I think that implies. Well, that does not say much for the doctor, certainly. But we cannot tell exactly. She might have died of a decline."

We then heard the bell tolling, and passed the church, where Mr. Williams was seen standing in his surplice, book in hand, awaiting in the porch the slowly-moving funeral procession.

Just then a man with a ragged waistcoat, covered from head to foot with slush and mud, and of the colour of yellow ochre, put his hand to his battered, brimless hat, which seemed to fill up the carriage-window, and said, in a very rough and unsympathetic tone, "Please, sur, Muster Williams' compliments, and he have ordered luncheon up at the house, and if you go on afore, he'll be there as soon as he can get over this here bit of a funeral."—Of course this was only a grave-digger's version of a clergyman's message.

However little we may believe in omens, every one has felt how the sight of a funeral, when we are ourselves bent upon pleasure, "doth give us pause." The hearse and mourning-coaches and mutes, and all the heraldry of woe, seem strangely out of tune with the rattling of carts, and cabs, and omnibuses, when we meet death in Piccadilly; but, in a country village, even this absurd pomp and pageantry teach an emphatic lesson—that the mighty landlord and the lowly tenant

> "Await alike the inevitable hour.
> The paths of glory lead but to the grave."

"Why, that can't be the poor clergyman that dreadful-looking man has made the hole for!" said Alice. "I thought he was buried some time ago."

"No, Alice, my dear," replied Ellen; "it is not for the poor clergyman. There is a time for people, as well as ministers; but it so happened that I was thinking of the poor Rector's funeral,

too: it must have passed this way ——." We were now turning into the field-gate, opened by an old woman, with her apron full of sticks, and I found Alice a penny to throw to her, in the way of a good beginning.—"And I was thinking," continued Ellen, "of all the sanguine hopes and feelings with which that Rector once came, as we do now, to see all the comforts and luxury on which his friends, no doubt, were calculating, as much as ours, in this same Parsonage of Elkerton."

Yes; our first entering on a Rectory is, indeed, suggestive of serious thoughts. There is your house, and there, not far off, the graveyard: who enters one must be mindful of the other. There is your benefice, and there your parish. You take at once the wages and the work; and, amidst the many scrolls in which a certain class of my brethren delight, I wonder they have never chosen for the Gothic arch of their inner door, "OCCUPY TILL I COME."

It always gives me a turn to hear the common expression of a "snug and comfortable living." The solemn words, "Son, remember, thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things," sounds in my ear: and a parish of many thousands of souls—"yes, souls!" as the Bishop of Exeter once repeated, with a solemn emphasis—"This is, indeed, an awful responsibility, enough to qualify the eagerness with which a Living is sometimes sought."

Such were the thoughts with which we drove up the coach-road; and there was something in the still autumnal day, the sombre sky, the falling leaves, as also in that air of silence, neglect, and desolation, which mark a country residence where the last tenant has ceased to be—all very much in unison with our subdued and chastened feelings.

But children have no such sympathies. Alice was excited and restless in the extreme, and exclaimed at every turn, "Oh, there's the garden! There's the green-house! Oh, how, beautiful! Oh, how I wish Emma Sackville could see that! And you promised she should come and play with me—but, what for do you cry, mamma?"

"Never mind, Alice," said her grandmother. "Your dear mamma is weak and poorly; she will be better presently. It almost makes me cry, and cry for joy, to think what a pretty home you will have; and, please God, how healthy and happy you will be here. Poor, dear little baby-boy!" continued the grandmother, soliloquising, "how pretty and ruddy he will look!"

And now Mrs. Bromley, with a freshly-creased apron, which looked all the whiter from the contrast with her black stuff gown,

appeared at the door, ready to help us to alight. She was a respectable-looking woman of fifty, born, bred, charity-schooled, employed, and supported — all, more or less, I have no doubt, at the expense of successive Rectors. The day was as critical a one for Mrs. Bromley as for us: because, there are some people in the world who never reflect that all nature abounds in parasites; and still less that there are certain rights, founded less in Common Law than common feeling,—such as gipsy rights to sheltered lanes, and an old woman's rights to the only place she is easy in, or of any use to herself or others, rights founded on that best of all Common Law — the law of good, kind souls, and common sense.

I saw Mrs. Bromley look inquiringly and anxiously at Ellen; and as she heard the kind and sympathetic tone in which Ellen echoed her benediction, saying, "I hope we shall, as you observe, all be happy, and all do well, in this delightful home;" I thought I saw Mrs. Bromley brighten up, as much as to say, "It is quite right this time: and now we shall do."

A parsonage to the poorer classes is like the Court to the rich, and Mrs. Bromley was one of its hangers-on, having acted many parts. For years she had been Mistress of the Robes, taking care of all the charity-blankets and the bags of lying-in linen. She was once "Spare-broom in Waiting" for odd times and emergencies, and she had once been Maid-of-honour to a young married couple, and ridden six miles in the rumble as "my own maid" as far as the railway station, and then walked back again. An old servant we must expect to have a long accumulation of odd ways and habits, with privileges and immunities that multiply with every year of service, and stick to her like barnacles to the bottom of a ship, till they prove a serious hindrance at last; still, every one who could make allowance for a little pride of place and the liberty of the subject, acknowledged Mrs. Bromley to be a very useful and respectable person in a quiet family.

"I have made all as comfortable as I can, ma'am, and can assure you," said Mrs. Bromley, "I have kept the windows open on fine days, and aired everything — four days and a half Mary Tibbs was here — we always have Mary a-charring, ma'am — and cleaned every place thoroughly. Poor master's room where he died — a very handsome corpse, and looked lovely, he did, up to the very hour they closed him down — that room has been scrubbed twice over, that has. It was a very long illness, you know, ma'am."

"And did you nurse him?" asked Emily.

"In course, ma'am. Bromley's my name, ma'am. Ah! your

young people won't be here long before they know that the Rectors trust everything to me, ma'am ——"

Ellen looked at me, as much as to say, We have paid for our experience on that point.

"—— Poor dear Mr. Pratt was the third Rector that I have laid out in that same front room. Two of our Rectors, in my time, we have buried where three others—that goes a hundred years back—lie in our chancel, and one—that was old Mr. Wotton—was taken all the way to Romsey to be buried. We were all sorry for that bit of a fancy, because, as our sexton said, it spoilt the set."

Having a shrewd suspicion that Mrs. Bromley before long would startle Ellen, by saying that she should be equally happy to perform the same sad office for me too, I proposed that we should at once make a general survey of the rooms, to give Mr. Williams time to return.

The house was a good specimen of a Tudor parsonage, with high ceilings and long oak panels. The furniture and the arrangements had an air of English comfort, and betrayed ideas formed in college-rooms. I was pleased with this, because many houses look as if the gentleman found the money and the tradesman found the taste; but I like a house which looks as if the owner had added here an easy-chair, and there some shelves for his books, or a side-table for his papers, so that you can read the habits of a distinct individual of the human species in the prints and traces he has left behind him.

As we walked round the house, I believe I looked most at the study; Ellen looked most at the drawing-room; but my mother was in ecstasies at finding a light and airy room, which she declared at once must be the nursery. In short, for the time, the good lady almost forgot that a parsonage had any higher purpose than that of turning out a set of children, the ruddiest and the chubbiest in the whole parish.

And now Mr. Williams returned, and asked leave to introduce the Rev. John James, one of the neighbouring clergy, who was anxious to offer any assistance in his power, while we were taking possession. But first, Mr. Williams, always most exact and methodical, said, "Excuse me a few minutes to make the proper entry—Mrs. Bromley, where is the Register?"

"The burial book, sir? Please, sir, Mr. Bird (the attorney) sent for all the books down to his office."

"And did you give them up?" I inquired.

"Please, sir, the boy said he'd keep them nice and dry:

for it was rainy. Poor master wasn't particular about those books."

"High time, indeed, that we had a Registration Act," I observed. "How easy to tamper with the entries, and, in effect, with the title to an estate!"

"Very true," said Mr. Williams; "and one day, in making out a certificate in St. Martin's Church, Leicester, I found two entries—one of the baptism of a man, the other of his burial—evidently written in a modern text hand, on scraped vellum, among the perpendicular and angular characters of the seventeenth century; and the solicitor on the other side had notice of the fraud."

"Yes," said Mr. James, "what with moth, mice, damp, and clerks who couldn't spell, things were bad enough. Many a man has been buried without any trace of his death which the law could recognise."

"But that might be very inconvenient," said my mother.

"Most painfully so," said Mr. James: "for how could his widow marry again? Why, there is a lady of my acquaintance at this moment, separated from her husband five years ago: he went his way, and she went hers; and she forgot to keep an eye upon him. Now, from the state of his health, I have no doubt he is dead, and I know she has set her affections (such as they are) on a pleasant sort of fellow she met in a boarding-house. —Boarding-houses, you know, are full of such ladies, and perfectly dangerous.—In this case, a certificate of burial would be complete emancipation—a 'ticket of leave'—to this lady: because, it is all the evidence the law requires in proof of death."

"Certainly," said Mr. Williams, in his usual didactic way, "when a man is registered he must be dead."

"So I thought at one time," said Mr. James, "but one day, in North Devon, I buried a coffin full of brick-bats. An hospital nurse gave information, because the house-surgeon did not please her. The brick-bats were disinterred, and I had to scratch out 'John Jones' from the register, and make a memorandum that the coffin was full of bricks."

After this, Mr. Williams, who, whenever he heard one thing to the disparagement of the Church, had always something worse against the Chapel, and who was constantly defending every deficiency in our Church system, or any defect in clerical conduct, by saying, that both men and measures in this mortal state fall far short of ideal perfection, slowly remarked that registration in Dissenters' burial-grounds used to be far less satisfactory.

"You are quite right there," said Mr. James; "and a solicitor in large practice told me that once, when he was engaged in searching for evidence of the death of a member of Lord Nelson's family, who was buried among the Wesleyans, all the clerk could produce was some loose leaves in a sorry state of dilapidation. In these leaves, he was puzzled by seeing thick scratches of the pen, making black bars, some an inch, and some only half an inch long. As he requested a key to these hieroglyphics, the man innocently exclaimed, 'You see, sir, we bury the people very decently here—nowhere more so, as to the people themselves—but the names of them we can't always catch, and I am forced to do the best I can about the entries. So those marks are 'longs,' and these 'shorts,' in the column where the names ought to be; and a long or a short means a man or a boy, or perhaps a woman or a girl, as the case might be; for it can't make much difference when once their day is done!'"

By this time we had entered the luncheon-room, and all parties had been introduced.

The Rev. John James, it will be easily believed, was one of those men who would have been a first-rate conversationalist, if he had but known that conversation is a game for two, and that one equal half-part should consist in listening, and not in mere angling for questions on which to hang story after story.

The Rev. John James, also, though a good pastor, was wonderfully ready with all about livings and tithes, and preferment of all kinds, and the value of the same, net as well as nominal; for "these are two very different things," he would say. "Why, where's the use of taking 400*l.* a-year with one hand, when, as I once knew, you pay out 120*l.* poor-rates with the other? But here poor-rates are light. Mr. Horton says he will not harbour any paupers on his estate; he pulls down all cottages more than enough for his own labourers, and some even of them live in the next parish. So there you are fortunate, Mr. Austin. Another good thing is, that there is no Queen Anne's bounty in your case."

"A good thing you call that, Mr. James?" said my mother; "why, really Queen Anne's bounty, or any other bounty, or little addition, would be very acceptable with a young family."

"Then I must explain," said Mr. James, "that Queen Anne established what you will best understand by a kind of loan society for rebuilding parsonage-houses, formed on so tempting a principle that one man borrows what another lives to pay."

"Oh!" said my mother, "if my son has nothing to pay, that is fortunate, certainly: I quite understand you so far."

"The Rectory," said Mr. Williams, "is also in excellent repair, which is not always the case."

"Excellent, indeed, ma'am," put in Mrs. Bromley, as she handed some potatoes, "and very dry. A beautiful linen closet ours is: the kitchen chimney runs up the back of it. And as for the jams—I make the preserves, ma'am, and have these twenty years——"

"Then a pretty good fixture you are and intend to be," I said to myself. For this was a feeler, evidently.

——"The jam—your little lady shall taste it presently—never moulders in our closet."

"Yes," said Mr. James, "you are very fortunate in several respects, I can assure your son of that, Mrs. Austin. There is no dilapidation worth speaking of; but what there is, you must be particular in charging to the Rector's family."

"Indeed!" said Ellen; "poor things! I should be very sorry to do so. We have this delightful house all for nothing, and if the good old gentleman was well off, no doubt his death is a great loss to his poor relatives, if he happened to have any."

"Happened to have any!" replied my mother: "why, my dear girl, everybody I know, and everybody I ever did know, happens to have some. Yes, the Rector is sure to have left some poor relations. And as to their legacies, if they are lucky enough to have any, these legacies are generally made so safe and prudential that you can scarcely ever get at them; whereas, all their mourning they must find ready money for, poor creatures! No, Ellen, I would not let Henry be covetous, or ask for anything. I am sure I would not."

"But, mamma," said Ellen, "you don't think my husband would ask?"

"I do not know that, dear," was the world-wise reply. "For gentlemen often do—in the way of business, as they tell us, and without meaning any harm—what sounds to ladies downright grasping and dishonest."

Here Mr. Williams rubbed his hands, and his eyes sparkled with satisfaction; and he afterwards observed to me, "How I do admire that old lady! Not half the questionable actions would be done in this world if men would only test them by the healthful instincts and the unsophisticated conscience and feelings of their own wives and daughters."

"Without qualifying the liberality of a lady's sentiments," I

rejoined, "we must remember that ladies are not so well aware of the liabilities of a Rector."

"That is exactly what I was going to remark, with a very pathetic case in point," said Mr. James. "You remember all about that new roof, don't you, Mrs. Bromley?"

"Remember it? indeed I do, sir," she replied; "and I have many a time said, that I don't think that old crazy roof which the agent said so much about, leaked much more in water than the poor Rector's widow shed in tears. Oh! it was shameful! Oh! it was cruel! Five hundred pounds they made the good lady lay out for dilapidations—they did, indeed, every farthing of it; and no husband alive to stand up for her rights, or look after the workmen. Just as if it was not trial enough to the poor widow lady to have to turn out of her home, but she must have the provocation of patching up the place for those who were hungry for her situation."

"But had the widow no redress?" asked Emily.

"She was told," said Mr. Williams, "that she might sue the widow of the preceding Rector, if not too late; which of course it was."

"I did not understand such a law as this," said my mother.

"Perhaps not," said Mr. James; "but scarcely a rectory in the country would be standing by this time, if there were no valuation for repairs, and a tenant were allowed to hand down any kind of rats' castle to his successor."

"Mr. Pratt had no wife, and no female relation living with him, had he?" inquired Ellen.

"No, ma'am, not one: that is, except me," said Mrs. Bromley, as if she were part and parcel of every Rector's family.

"Oh! I am so glad to hear it," exclaimed Ellen. "Dear me! what should we do, if we found that at this moment some poor lady, in the midst of her affliction, were moving to make way for us!"

"And as to that kind of unpleasantness," said Mrs. Bromley, "I did witness such a case once; and that was with the last Rector but one—his lady. Six hundred pounds was all that was left for her, and the lawyers fried the fat out of that, pretty well, you may be sure, ma'am; and by the time she had paid her dilapidations—and everybody charged the highest, and it went to my heart to see the painter's and the plasterer's men idle over it—the dear lady had scarcely anything left, and had to go out in the world. 'Out in the world, indeed!' said I; 'better see any poor lady, at her time of life, in her grave.'"

"Quite right, Mrs. Bromley," said my mother: "I have seen that sad resource tried more than once. Ladies have seldom anything to go out in the world with except, poor things! their feelings and hysterics. This will not do for persons who want a housekeeper or a companion: for the first thing they always ask you is, whether you are cheerful. Your own relatives may put up with you, and even they don't much like it. Though if you happen to have a nice annuity to join housekeeping, then they are all quarrelling who shall have you."

Considering the state of Ellen's spirits just then, I thought it high time to change the subject of conversation. It is all very true that a Rector's wife has the unpleasant reflection that she must lose her home if she loses her husband. Still, I wished to keep such bitters as those out of the cup as long as possible. So, taking advantage of Mrs. Bromley's absence from the room, I inquired about the people and the society in the neighbourhood.

"You will find Mr. Seymour, our doctor, an excellent neighbour. I don't mean that he is very fashionable, or that he reckons as 'county,'" said Mr. Williams; "but almost every one is glad of his company in a quiet way."

Mr. Williams, it must be remembered, was not of a family that reckoned as "county."

"Yes," said Mr. James, "and Mr. Austin will be delighted with the Doctor's wife. Never mind what they reckon her; but Mrs. Seymour, as she moves quietly and gracefully about the village in her plain cotton gown, commands all that heartfelt silent homage from the poor, very unlike the knowing, bobbing curtsey dropped to silk or satin."

"And there are some very genteel people, on a visit, seen in the Doctor's pew sometimes," added Mr. Williams; "and that puzzles the county people more than ever."

"I suppose they are very popular here?" said Emily.

"Why, as to being popular," said Mr. James, "the Seymours cannot afford society, or to add one more to the now small cycle of country dinner-parties, and they are the wrong people to be generally popular in themselves."

"I think I can guess why," said Ellen.

"People say they don't suit themselves to their circumstances —which means, that to be patronised they won't, and to be astonished they can't."

Of course we all have observed that, dress up folly and commonplace insipidity as fine as you please, it never feels at

beside that natural grace and those thrilling intonations which mark creation's gentlewomen.

Emily now alluded to the state of the parish, which caused Ellen to inquire—

"Did I not hear that the last Rector was unpopular with some of the parishioners? How did that happen? Mr. Austin says the poor speak well of him."

"Mr. Pratt was a very good man—a very well-meaning man," said Mr. Williams. "The only pity was, that people did not understand his motives."

"Yes," said Mr. James, "Pratt was a very good book, but few could read it. He was a man utterly without tact, and wholly ignorant of human nature: of course I mean, Elkerton nature. I never saw a man more completely under a mistake. He expected fair dealing from grinding farmers; he expected mercy in a Union master, charity at the Board, and justice on the Bench."

"But I never understood this," said Ellen, quite alarmed at this epitome of Elkerton society. "Everybody said that everything was delightful at Elkerton. Surely there cannot be such very bad people here as you are describing now?"

"Bad?" said Mr. James: "I don't mean the people here are bad—only that there are in the adjective 'good' three degrees of comparison, and, I think, more with some things, especially with eggs. And now I think of it, this will just explain my meaning—for here we have new-laid eggs, fresh eggs, and pudding eggs. Now the Elkerton worthies, and most other worthies, have the cardinal virtues of this pudding quality—something conventional or passable, and as good as any practical people can expect."

"But I understood you to imply," said Ellen, "the people were neither honest nor Christian."

"No, pardon me," said Mr. James; "I meant that poor Pratt used to say so. The pudding-egg quality he could not understand; he called it stale, rotten, addled, and all kinds of unpleasant words."

"But you can't always get new-laid eggs; you must put up with pudding-eggs," said my mother, who did not hear very quickly, and who, also, like many other reasoners, was apt to mistake the illustration for the argument.

"Precisely what I meant, and precisely what Mr. Pratt could never understand. He set out with a high standard of ideal virtue, and was a very Cato to every moral recruit who measured

an inch too short. He was one of those men who expect cabmen to ask their exact fare, and admire the charming simplicity of fourpenny bits—who expect cooks to abhor perquisites, and a maid-servant's male cousin to be within the degrees of consanguinity."

"But how did that make him unpopular?" asked my mother, under the same kind of mistake as before. "It seems a very natural mistake, especially to one not used to housekeeping."

"Why, in this way," said Mr. James. "First of all we will take the case of the Hortons. Their square pew has contained a very depreciating kind of hearers for the last three years."

"And what was the cause of offence?" said Emily.

"There was a tipsy riot at the 'Three Cups,' and the Rector wanted the license withdrawn, forgetting that the publican was Horton's tenant. Then Joe Wadham, who was generally an honest lad enough, wired a hare: the Rector tried to save Joe, as it was his first offence, but all in vain; poor Joe was sent to gaol."

"And did Mr. Pratt scold the Squire?" asked my mother.

"He looked unutterable things at him, and the next sermon seemed personal; for the next sermon, if worth anything, though five years old, nearly always does seem personal on such occasions—so true to nature and comprehensive is the Word of God;—and the Squire put the Parsonage under quarantine from that hour."

"But ought not a Rector to stand up for justice?" asked Ellen.

"Certainly," said Mr. Williams. "It is among a Rector's most solemn duties to uphold the standard of God's law, and to raise his voice like the prophets of old, whose fierce denunciations were pointed against those who loved not justice, and did not mercy. Still, it must be by a word in season, and there is a certain way of doing such things."

"I cannot endure injustice," said my mother, "and I am sure I should have delighted in such a pastor; and I only hope that, as to a pastor's defending the poor, this 'way of doing things' does not mean (as it too often does) that Harry should be afraid of speaking out, and so do no good at all."

In this good, wholesome observation, at which Mr. Williams once more brightened up with admiration, we had one more proof of what philosophers call "the connexion between the moral and intellectual virtues;" which means in plain English, that when the heart is in the right place, the head seems seldom set on wrong. So Mr. Williams remarked,—

"I think, Mr. James, after that admonition, you must indeed stand corrected."

"Now, seriously," said Mr. James,—"for I know you are always wanting to keep me serious, Williams, albeit there are, on the balance, so many more frowns than smiles in this hazy world of ours, that the Sydney Smiths seem very useful in their scheme of Providence—seriously, I fully agree with Mrs. Austin and yourself as to the duties of the Rector and the Rectory-house."

"Yes," said Mr. Williams, "the world is the world still; there's but little plain honesty, to say nothing of honourable feeling, in trade: our farmers cry down what they buy, and cry up what they sell; and as to our country gentry and magistrates, Poor-law guardians, and committee-men of all kinds, if one of them has an interest or a prejudice in one direction, it is folly to expect him to look in the other."

"Granted," said Mr. James: "only look at our electioneering, with that bribery which always risks perjury—a practice sanctioned among the first men in the land! This alone will show that 'the world' and not 'the word' is the rule of action with the laity."

"I say, therefore," said Mr. Williams, "that every Rectory should stand forth as a House of Justice and of Equity—the abode of one that doeth truth from his heart—of one to uphold a perfect standard and a blameless character for perfect integrity and purity of dealing, and——"

"Then," said Ellen, "I am sure Henry must not farm his own land: there must be no buying and selling—we must forego these profits."

"Profits?" said mother. "Why, my dear child, it is nothing but loss—so your father has always found it, I know, to our cost; and if the butter is bad, there is no sending it back; and as to the eggs and the milk——"

"The old story," I rejoined, "is, that the gentleman's hens rarely lay, and his cow is only fit for a dry nurse."

"Yes," said Mr. James, "a man who would not risk the character of being worldly and covetous—the profits of farming being in little things—should never buy and sell with his own parishioners. The toughest goose and the dearest hay is always kept for the Parsonage-house."

"I could relate a painful instance," said Mr. Williams, "where I felt almost put to silence in my pulpit by some small dealings of mine, which did not turn out well for two farmers in my last parish. First of all, I sold Farmer Wild a pig for thirty

shillings ; and he would not have bought such a pig of any one else, considering the breed and all — real Berkshire — under six-and-thirty shillings, at the very least ; and, really, I was so fond of my pig, that, when it came to the last, I did not want to part with it at all."

— Here Mr. James seemed restless, and looked, as much as to say, Well, we are in for one of his long stories this time.—

" And no sooner was the pig taken away from my yard than — whether he ate anything that disagreed with him I can't say — he sat up on end upon his tail, and did nothing but squeak till he died."

" But you could not help that," said my mother, quite gravely, while we were suffering all the pains of suppressed laughter.

" No, indeed, I could not," said Mr. Williams, " though all sorts of reflections were made upon me about that pig. Well, at last this story of the pig might have been forgotten, when, unhappily, Farmer Trumper — and Farmer Trumper and Farmer Wild were like brothers ; they went to market in the same old gig, and one always waited for the other coming out of church ; and they sat in church where they could see and wink at each other — Farmer Trumper bought my red-and-white cow, which soon after ——"

" Sat up on end upon her tail too," suggested Mr. James.

" — No ; she died calving, or, at least, they were obliged to kill her, to prevent it being said she died a natural death ; and do you know, I never heard the last of those animals, all the time I was at Lawton ; and, whenever my sermon touched upon honesty or fair dealing between man and man — and I always like to make my sermons practical — I could see Farmer Wild and Farmer Trumper look at each other, as much as to say, ' How about my pig ?' and ' How about my cow ?' "

I perfectly agree with Mr. Williams ; since you cannot farm without buying and selling, the more the parson can contrive to do without farming the better. Every man loves a bargain dearly ; and a covetous, worldly habit, is a weed of quick growth. And what becomes of the pastoral character when, every week, some one is heard to say that the parson can stand out for a shilling as long as any farmer in the parish ?

It was now time to bid these gentlemen adieu, and to reconnoitre with a view to furnishing and other preparations. It was arranged that Mrs. Bromley should form part of our establishment, and superintend any alterations we might deem advisable in the course of the following day.

We returned home with feelings very different from those with which we had set out. For when, in this mortal world, did the hopeful future ever comprehend all the little drawbacks which every position in life, at a nearer view, invariably reveals?

The sight of Mr. Williams created uneasiness both in Ellen and myself. Ellen was not without feelings of compunction in displacing so good a man, one many years my senior, and full of experience in the ministry, and a man who had had so much experience in the parish, whereas I was quite new to it. Happy we were to think that this excellent man must have made way for some other if not for me. One thing, I thought, is beyond all doubt; — Mr. Williams, in point of industry and zeal, however difficult to emulate, is the lowest standard that my conscience can allow.

At that moment I felt as if my ordination vow were to be taken anew, and as if I were once more seeking the means of life, not without heavy responsibility against the great day of final account.

CHAPTER III.

HOW HARD WORK BEGINS TO TELL — THE VILLAGE DOCTOR AND HIS WIFE OPEN OUR EYES TO THINGS AS THEY ARE.

No sooner had we returned home than Ellen, fatigued with all the excitement of the day, I soon found had taken refuge in her bedroom. I was myself equally disposed for a quiet hour. For, what with Mr. James, Mr. Williams, and Mrs. Bromley, I had ideas which it would take a week to digest; and I had a maze of hurried thoughts, which were making a kind of country-dance up and down my mind. Then Freddy was reminding us of our promise of rabbits, and Alice talked of rivalling Emma Sackville with dickey-birds.

Of all the envied positions of life, there is not one but looks far more desirable at a distance. All the honour and all the emoluments of office it is easy to calculate; but as to the cares and responsibilities, and all the fancies and foibles of our new sphere of action, and the little ways of little people—these present themselves only at a nearer view. It was natural, therefore, that Ellen, though never disposed to be sanguine, should evince a very sober satisfaction with her visit to Elkerton.

The first remark which Ellen made was, that the world seemed much the same everywhere. While the two clergymen were talking of Elkerton people, she almost fancied they were alluding to her old acquaintance at Lachford. For, in both places the town people were envying the county people, and the county people were holding up their heads above the town. Mr. Williams, worthy man that he seemed, was counted nobody, because poor. Wealth was everything, and worth nothing; and not a step must be taken, it seemed, even with the kindest intentions to the poor, without considering the pride and the prejudices of a few listless country drones — men without any sense of their responsibility for the station which they held, who bred poachers as fast as game.

Ellen also had gleaned that, even at Elkerton, there could be Church parties without piety, and that people were High Church and Evangelical, just as they were Tories and Whigs — the former appellation no more vouching for their piety than the latter for their patriotism. Also, that the poor of Elkerton looked upon the parson as a kind of relieving-officer, while the rich regarded him as one of their dinner set.

All this taught us that our chief resource must be in our home, and in each other. The character we heard of Mrs. Seymour and of the Doctor was certainly refreshing, and we hoped that we might find something genuine and healthy in some members, at least, of the families around.

Having drawn Ellen into some such expressions as these, I am convinced I had an epitome of half the Rectories in England. Nominal religion, and religion as a matter of education and gentility, with square pew and curtains for a Sunday, and livery servants under the gallery — so much religion a clergyman may expect to find in nearly every country-house in his parish; but as to individual piety and responsibility — men who will give up a little from their comfort in church to allow more sittings for the poor, or young ladies or their brothers who will assist in schools, or classes, or lectures, or any social improvements that their pastor may suggest — Christians of this hearty description a Rector will only find with care and discrimination here and there.

In this respect discrimination is highly necessary. You will sometimes find one noble spirit in a most forbidding circle. For instance, Seymour would have persuaded me that, as he said, "The Elmores are a bad lot, and the Hortons are not much better." But Mrs. Seymour said, with a nice Christian discrimination, "Stay, my dear, I think the second Miss Elmore would be happy to be useful; and Edward Horton, if you can draw him from his books, has some of the Clarkson and Wilberforce spirit in him."

My father proposed that I should be made a magistrate; Uncle Ben thought not, and for a very good reason; — he was himself making interest with the Lord Lieutenant to be put into the commission of the peace. I said, that where no country gentleman could be found, a clergyman might consent; but that I had almost invariably observed that, with clerical magistrates, the Bible gave way to Burns, and the Gospel to "the Law;" and that, though clergymen certainly did settle many quarrels where laymen granted summonses, still I had not forgotten a

case where all the Brown family and connexion looked shy of their pastor, because he had decided some point in favour of the Whites.

"It destroys all the pastoral character," said Uncle Ben. "I made up my mind on that point when talking with an old fisherman at Lynton, in North Devon.

"'I don't hold with Parson Thompson,' said the man.

"'Why not?' I inquired.

"'He ain't a proper sort o' parson,' he replied, doggedly.

"'What's the matter with him, friend?'

"'Why, when we go to church he says, 'Dearly beloved brethren;' but when he has me up to Combe Martin (the Bench) he says, 'You old rascal!'"

—We must always remember that, as to language, the lower orders clothe our meaning in their own terms.—

We had now been six weeks from the trials and the poverty of my incumbency at Lachford, and Ellen was only slowly recovering the shock her constitution had sustained. When I looked at her sometimes, in the same home and in the same room in which I had played with her as a child, and won and wooed her as a wife, pictures widely different presented themselves to my mind:—

First, I saw a happy child, watched over in her every turn and movement by a devoted mother; yes, devoted: no sordid feeling, no thought of self dashes that yearning, that gushing from the very fountain of the soul. Nothing else in this world is like it: it is the one thing only in this mortal state that seems an emanation from Him who Himself is love—Himself is light—in whom "is no darkness at all"—"no shadow of a turning:" for, no shadow of reserve, no reflex feeling, sweeps across the devoted parent's brow.

Then, a slight and pallid figure once more sat lonely and silent in unbreathing apathy, as if the mere form only were there, but her soul were far away with that lamented mother.

Once more, I saw the same dear girl, less pale and stricken, but not less silent and motionless, her mourning garb laid aside but her grief intensified, because the brusque, the hard-ware, the determined, the "no-nonsense" Mrs. Horley, was now sitting in that tender, that graceful mother's chair.

And lastly, a more happy scene appeared: methought I saw that resigned, that thoughtful and broken-hearted Ellen—her whole soul expanded and her chilled affections warmed into life —the same—lightening into beaming love and womanhood, and

finding expression for her most sacred emotions in my then enraptured self.

Eight years have passed away — years of toil, anxiety, and of poverty — and how shall I paint her now?

My mother said, "Ellen is out of spirits and rather delicate; she shall have a nice mutton chop for luncheon, and a good glass of port wine."

My father said, "Ellen must pay some visits and go among her neighbours: all her miseries are past now. Harry must not let her mope so, but he must do something to rouse her and to brighten her up."

The truth was, the excitement which had supported Ellen in her troubles in the misery of Pump Street, and the excitement of another kind which succeeded with her change of fortune, had now subsided, and a reaction was evidently taking place. Ellen's mind was now for the first time at leisure, and her imagination was haunted with painful visions from her life past; for, sometimes she would start in her sleep, and say she was dreaming she was still at Lachford. At other times she was fixed and abstracted, and her absent thoughts, full well I knew, had always flown away to the same gloomy scenes. Her brow still wore the same enduring cloud, overcast with thought, which I strove in vain to disperse; that brow still knit in painful lines which I could not clear away. In a word, she seemed aged in care and sorrow, and I began to fear that her grief was stereotyped, and that those early wrinkles and scores of woe would never disappear, so as to gladden me once more with the happy and unclouded features of my dear wife — dear — thrice dear — because my patient partner and my only solace in so many years of wretchedness extreme.

"For days and weeks," said Dr. Seymour, "after I was rescued from the raft in the Gulf of Mexico" (he was one of those wrecked in "the Tweed,") "the shrieks of the dying and the roar of the breakers were sounding in my ears. So it is with this poor lady, snatched from the billows and the buffeting of outrageous fortune."

I had something of the same feeling, too. For, in Lachford, I encountered so much opposition that I lived constantly with my back up — always on the defensive — and, for awhile, the feeling and the habit remained, though the occasion had ceased and the vexatious people were far away.

Nothing but time, and rest, and diversion, could do Ellen any good. The kind of interest that that good man Seymour took in

us, as will presently appear, made me feel I must be his friend for life.

Mr. Seymour—for I must now introduce him—with green door, and brass knocker, and "night-bell," in the middle of the village—was the Elkerton doctor.

Seymour was naturally jealous of being thought to be looking for practice; still, there is a certain intuition in an honest mind which discerns, as by an unerring instinct, the heart that throbs responsive. So the Doctor, when I was at the Rectory one rainy day, directing some paint and papering, began to enter into Ellen's case. He had heard me observe over a glass of brandy and water, for we were both nearly wet through, that we had had hard times, and this Living came just about in time——

"As late as it well could come, I should say," he observed, "judging from the state of Mrs. Austin's health."

"And now," I said, "she does not improve as fast as I could wish to see her."

"But why do you leave her at home?" he asked. "Do not all these alterations amuse her?"

"Certainly," I replied, "nothing can divert her more; but it is the fatigue that I am afraid of."

"Well," he said, as he took his cigar from his lips—and nothing makes a man so brief and sententious as smoking—"this is a very natural kind of fear, no doubt; but do you know the way they cool glass from the furnace?"

"Why, I believe they bake it, and so let it cool gradually."

"Exactly—that is the way," he said, with a deliberate puff between each word.

"Then you mean, that treating my wife as if, in fact, she had been tried in the furnace of a hard striving life——"

"Of course," he added, with another whiff.

The Doctor was evidently pleased to find that I could carry on his favourite shorthand conversation.

"Some persons," he well said, "talk like slow players at long whist—I like shorts. When your friend knows the end of the sentence from the beginning, or the whole argument from one remark, why inflict all the rest upon him?"

"Then your advice is, that the sooner Mrs. Austin is settled here the better?"

"No doubt of it, Mr. Austin. Prepare a room or two as soon as possible. Mrs. Bromley is a comfortable kind of body; for a glass of gin and water or so—not that I mean she likes it strong, but for the comfort and the compliment of the thing—she

will help your arrangements, for she knows the people well enough."

"Then you think well of Mrs. Bromley?" I said, anxious to inquire before I trusted her too far; for I had not forgotten my early experience with Jinny Hayward, the trusty servant of my Rector at Greenside.

"Yes," he said, "I like Mrs. Bromley, and so does Jacques the farmer—Mis*tress*, indeed, she is not; it is only brevet rank, though Jacques would be glad enough to make the same rank substantial—Martha (for so we call her) has a small account in the savings' bank, and Jacques's account is a very small account too. However, you may keep Martha a year or two, and, meanwhile, she will make you very comfortable."

"Really," I said, after a pause, "I am much obliged by your good advice. Suppose we look about and see what rooms we can use."

Just as we were moving from the kitchen fire—the best of all places with a wet friend and a cigar on a chilly day—Mrs. Bromley came in breathless haste to say the Doctor was wanted: an accident had happened. At the same time I espied a tall lady, with a grey cloak and umbrella, standing in the porch, as if to avoid observation.

"You can see Mr. Austin, our new minister," said Mrs. Bromley, loud enough for me to hear. "Please, sir, this is Mrs. Seymour," she added, as if mistress of the ceremonies.

Mrs. Seymour, as I advanced to receive her and to ask her to walk in, which I did with far more deference than with most doctors' wives—for there was that in her tone and manner which instinctively put me on my best behaviour—seemed a little disconcerted at such an introduction. However, the conscious blush soon passed away, and, after inquiries for Mrs. Austin, she told her husband he was wanted at the miller's immediately, and added something I did not understand.

"Now, is not this hard upon me?" said Seymour; "there is no such hurry but I might well take my time and finish my dinner very often when I am sent for: but if I delay, in goes Foggs, the druggist and cow-doctor—for he is little better—and bleeds every one, and by the time I come my patient is almost dead."

"You remember Mr. Elmore's tea-boy?" said the lady.

"Quite a case in point," said Seymour. "That boy stuffed himself with green gooseberries till his buttons were bursting off, and by the time I went to him, Foggs had actually bled him like a pig—a little more and he had died."

"Yes," said Mrs. Seymour, "and you cannot tell how anxious he makes me. I am sure he will be the death of somebody if allowed to go on."

"But is there no stopping him?" I asked.

"You may succeed, perhaps," he replied, "but I can't say a word about his disqualification. Besides, he is one of Lady Newcome's party; and as I cannot lend myself to a set of people who simply band together to depreciate others, her party supersedes me wherever they can."

"Yes," said Mrs. Seymour; "I am sure, William, you have already made a stand against abuses, and gone as far as you can go."

"As far as I can afford, my dear, and much farther too ——"

(Perhaps, hereupon, I opened my eyes with a note of interrogation.)

—— "Philanthropy will not do for poor men, Mr. Austin. People talk of the luxury of doing good. Well: it is quite a luxury, and a very costly luxury, too."

"Yes," said Mrs. Seymour, "there is no less truth than wit in that saying of Archdeacon Paley, that in a gentleman's establishment the most expensive thing to keep is a conscience. I am sure we have found it so."

"Aye," said the doctor, "a heart to do good, a back up at every abuse, and a conscience like that fine fellow in Homer, who said,—

> 'My soul abhors him as the gates of hell,
> Who one thing thinks and shall another tell.'

If this does not keep a country doctor poor, nothing will."

"What a mercy you had not any vote at the election when first you bought this practice!" said the lady.

"Aye," said he, "the Corn-law election that was. That was a critical time, indeed. All my livelihood might have gone to the winds. For, if I had not voted for stoats and weasels, docks and thistles, ignorance and idleness, under the name of Protection, I must have left Elkerton in a month."

"And what Mr. Seymour did after the cholera was really dangerous!" said the good wife.

"Why all the cottage owners and landlords—full half my patients—began to look intimidating at me."

"And that case of the riots at the Oxton Arms—wages paid on Saturday night, and men beating their poor wives who came to save some little of the money from the publican——"

"Yes: it was that 'interference,' as they called it, which lost me the Wainwright family—a fine, fretting, fidgety, and hot-luncheon-eating, nervous, dyspeptic set they were—that was a loss to me. The virtues alone would starve any doctor. It is the vices, not only sloth and gluttony, but envy, malice, and all uncharitableness—it is this that frets the machine to pieces, and makes work for us."

"I am often thankful," said Mrs. Seymour, "that so many parishes have in their Rector one man absolutely independent; for if the clergy drew their income as we do, from the rich, they could not possibly stand up for the poor."

"No," said Seymour, "they could not, indeed. Now, if any man speaks against the clergy, I always answer thus: Who, from north to south, and east to west, is the poor man's friend? Is it to the squire or the parson that the poor man goes to see him righted? Yes, it is very often nothing but the moral weight and opinion of the Parsonage-house that keep the squires and the farmers all in check, and the clergy must be independent to act this useful part."

All this brought to my recollection what I had observed in the small town of Lachford—that it is wonderful how servile those who earn money are to those who pay it. As to bigotry and intolerance, there is as much now as in Mary's reign. A poor French master once said to me, "If they do not burn you for your opinions in these days, they starve you, which is much the same."

By this time the Doctor was ready to go; but first Mrs. Seymour asked, "Is there anything I can do for you in the meanwhile?"

"Yes," said her husband. "Just walk round with Mr. Austin, and see what help we can give him. Mrs. Austin wants rest and quiet, and she must come here as soon as possible. Martha is the only servant engaged as yet: so your knowledge of the people will be of use."

Mrs. Bromley caught at that proposal, being very fond of Mrs. Seymour; as, indeed, all the parish were. So winning is that love and sympathy which makes all the world feel akin.

Mrs. Seymour was highly pleased with her task. She had heard enough of Ellen's history to feel there was one point in common between them. Both were ladies in heart and feeling, and both had experienced that the same reserve and refinement which is indispensable in their proper circle, only exposed them to jealousy and insult in a sphere below. Ellen had risen once

more to her former station, and Mrs. Seymour was delighted at the thoughts of making her supremely happy.

This good doctor's words made a deep impression. I saw my benefice in a new point of view. Here was I, placed on high vantage ground, not only as a teacher of righteous dealing, but as a Christian champion, and the Rectory it was my duty to hold as a house of defence, and a very castle for "the poor that crieth, and him that hath none to help him."

So, remember, my clerical brethren, that however benevolent is the doctor of the parish, and however much alive to all parish abuses and social improvement — still his hands are tied under pain of starvation, and that the clergy will do well to make friends of the doctors, and to give effect to their valuable suggestions.

CHAPTER IV.

HOW WE PREPARE TO MOVE TO ELKERTON RECTORY—A FAMILY PARTY, AND SOME DOMESTIC HISTORY OF AN INTERESTING KIND.

When I returned to Ellen, and told her of my plan for her speedy removal to Elkerton, she was very much pleased. After seven years of unceasing activity, a month seemed a long time to be without her usual resources: for we can settle to nothing in any one's house but our own. But, what was worse, the children were treated and stuffed till they were ill, and indulged by my mother till they were as wild as colts; and then grandpapa put them into the corner, not so much to mend their manners as to spare his nerves. All this had been going on so long that Ellen was afraid lest, between their misrule and correction, they should form more bad habits in a month than she could reform in a year.

All this was anything but rest to Ellen. Besides, we were naturally persons of quiet habits: with us, a few words went a long way, which is generally the case while people are down in the world: but in my father's house they were incessant talkers. It was one gabble at breakfast, dinner, and tea—all talked at the same time, and every one tried to be louder than her neighbour, as the only chance of being heard at all. Sister Emily was bad enough to encounter, but Fanny's talkativeness was something dreadful. Goody Keys said it was more than natural: she thought it nothing short of disease. This incessant talking I did not notice so much while I lived at home; but now, even to me it was an infliction, and to Ellen it was exhausting in the extreme.

I should be sorry to lead any one to suppose from this, that my dear wife was one to make troubles of trifles: but the truth is, that such was the state of her nerves that these were no trifles, but the trial was really serious; for, the only relief the poor

creature had was in going over to Mrs. Horley, and that was little else than easing one ear at the expense of the other.

Ellen remarked to me, with tears of debility in her eyes, that all she wanted was rest and quiet; "but here," she said, "I am in one turmoil of excitement." Our neighbour, Miss Keys—Miss Keys lived on chops and chickens, and a small annuity, in Mr. Walls's (the farmer) lodgings, furnished by herself, being one of those instances of decayed gentility whom every one pities, though they are often as happy as themselves after all,—Miss Keys was a standing dish with our family. If you wanted Miss Keys, Miss Keys would come; if you did not want Miss Keys, Miss Keys was never offended. If you had a trouble, you might talk to her about it till it was smaller by half; and if all up aloft with some moonshine project, Miss Keys was too wise and winning to chill you with a doubt, having sense enough to see that Hope is happiness while it lasts. Miss Keys had distilled from her many days, and condensed, as it were, into palpable drops of wisdom some few maxims, meet for the copybooks of future generations. For instance, when Ellen first told her we had the living of Elkerton,—

"You've actually got it, my child?" she said. "Not only promised, but positively yours? Not only parchments, but possession?"—And when Ellen had replied Yes, yes, yes, to every question, the good, kind creature clasped her withered hands together, and raised her eyes in thankfulness and said, "His name be praised for these and all His mercies!" and then her poor weasel frame—for the old lady was as thin as a toast-rack—seemed to glow, to warm, and to expand, as she exclaimed,—

"My dear child, this is the happiest day I have known for years. I had seen good Mr. Meadows, and heard what he said; and I did think you would have Elkerton: but *certainty beats probability into fits.*"

Well, it was to this good Miss Keys that Ellen went over for a little quiet sympathetic talk. She found her in the act of training up the farmer's honeysuckles, and disputing possession with the busy bees. She went for the twofold purpose of asking Miss Keys to come and eat some of my father's thirty-pound piece of beef—boiled expressly for a harvest-home supper for his labourers—and also to ventilate her little plan and project, and smooth out the creases of her ruffled thoughts.

I think I now see Miss Keys giving up the long vines of the honeysuckle to the eager bees, and then sidling away a few yards till she had seated herself on a butter-tub—which had been

turned up to drain—while Ellen moved the milk-stool and sat down by her, took one hand in hers and looked up duteously under the dear old lady's bee-hive bonnet, and waited for the old lady to speak first.

"You are looking, both of you," said our friend, "a great deal better than you did, my dears."

"I am thankful to say we are, Goody," said Ellen.

"Goody Keys" was the name my father gave his old friend, and after a time she used to sign herself "Goody Keys" in notes to our family; and, indeed, she was rather flattered by the appellation.

"But," continued Ellen, "we think we shall be better when we have moved—as we shall do shortly—to Elkerton, for we don't feel settled here."

Now, that word *settled* touched my conscience. It seemed to me to be the same Jack-o'-lantern we had been following, deeper and deeper in the mire, for some years past.

The same idea and the same doubt of our being settled, evidently crossed Goody's mind too: for she observed,—

"Yes, my dears, very naturally: perhaps you will: that is, I understand what you mean; your regular daily life, as it is to be, cannot begin too soon—at least, if you do not fatigue yourself."

"What I feel a great desire for," added Ellen—"yes, a longing, a real craving for, is—rest."

"I quite understand you," said Goody. "Mr. Austin's is the wrong place, certainly, for rest—for anything like quiet and repose. It is too much for my spirits above an hour or so. But as to being settled and rest in this sense, my dear, *there is very little rest in this world.* A parish brings a great many calls from without, and your own heart and conscience will give many a jog from within. Oh, dear me! You will find plenty to keep you on the move. Still, all this yearning and reaching forward—do not misunderstand me, I am doing the same, dear, old as I am, always looking forward: I can't help it, though my days are so few, and it's a mercy I struggled through last winter—but does not all this yearning tell us ——"

"Yes, Goody," I observed, "I know what you would say: this yearning, this unrest, proves that 'here we have no continuing city.' It also proves 'we seek one to come.'"

Pope says very truly,

"Man never is, but always to be blest."

It is also true that the verb "to be happy" is rarely used in the present tense. We say, "I was very happy" at such a time; or, "I shall be happy" under some other circumstances; but it always seems as if the present counted for nothing. Still, some years will go by before young people make these observations, and we may wisely reckon the years of our life less by the days that we have passed, than by the forms and phases our minds have passed through or realised.

In this sense we were both growing older very fast. We were turning one corner after another on the road of life, and opening our eyes wider and wider to a view of the land which lay before us.

It was now time to leave Goody Keys; and as I walked away, I thought I must throw a more cheerful colouring over the sombre picture of life which had been placed before Ellen; so I reminded Ellen that there were ports and havens in our voyage, and resting-places in our pilgrimage, and of these we must make the most; and then I quoted an admirable maxim from Conversation Sharpe,—

"The secret of happiness is to cultivate an undergrowth of smaller pleasures, well assured that the greater are rarely let on long leases."

Having reminded Goody Keys that it was a three-o'clock dinner, and that the evening's amusement must consist in diversions, with a supper for the labourers and their wives and families, we were sauntering home, when we saw a grey cob tied up to my father's gate, and wagging the stump of his tail in a very unequal combat with a swarm of flies. The sight of this cob made both of us nervous. We knew the grey animal of old, as that of Mr. Meadows, and we were sure our friend had come to tell us how he had arranged for our visit of grateful thanks to Lady Oxton.

Rescued as we had been from the miseries of Lachford, and finding in Lady Oxton a friend in our utmost need, and by her kind interest promoted to Elkerton, we naturally contemplated a first visit with pleasure dashed with pain.

It had once been my happiness to send the bailiff from a tradesman's door, just as the rickety bedstead was being unscrewed, and the feather-bed was rolling down the staircase; and when the poor wife came in the evening to thank me, her speech was as follows:—

"I am come—to offer—the—thanks of my heart for ——" and then the said heart, as if a perfect master of the art of eloquence, hung tear-drops in each eye, with a depth of feeling

in her look, and next it wisely choked her utterance lest it should entirely spoil her speech.

Ellen and I were both so weak and nervous after all our trials, that the dread of a "melting mood" hung over us as an incubus, whenever we reflected that we had a visit to pay together, that we had to walk straight up the long drawing-room at Norlands to a most queen-like lady at the end of it, and ——

But I am sure my reader will feel not only for us, but for our noble benefactress too.

But Lady Oxton was Lady Oxton still. I know enough now of her thoughtful and collected mind to be well assured that her sympathies anticipated this difficulty. Accordingly, Mr. Meadows, her steward, had come to say that Lady Oxton would pay us a visit when we had had time to recover our health and spirits, and were comfortably settled at Elkerton.

Ellen was much disappointed at my not being able to induce our good friend, Mr. Meadows, to join our harvest-home. She felt so deeply the kind manner in which he had announced to us Lady Oxton's success with the Chancellor, and had also so promptly assisted in removing us from Lachford, that she could hardly let him go. "You will have quite enough without me," he said; "for your uncle and his two noisy, rattling boys, will be here in an hour."

Uncle Ben alone was more than enough to take the stiffness and formality out of any party. He was a man who must always have his jokes, and he and my father were always sparring together; the one about the losses of a farm, the other about the gains of an attorney's office.

The kind of cross-fire was after this fashion: — First, Uncle Ben would set down at the highest the cost of every egg or pound of home-killed mutton; and then my father would retaliate on certain Bubble Companies, with Benjamin Austin, Esq., solicitor to the same; and, above all, on certain oddities, of which my uncle's Temperance Society, which my father called his "United Grand Junction Water-drinking Association," was one.

This kind of banter alone was trying for Ellen to encounter from three o'clock to nine; but uncle's boys, Tom and Teddy Austin, were something awful. They were just such boys as a jovial, joking, and a sharp and shrewd man of business, like Uncle Ben, might be supposed to rear — so readily do boys learn that everything in life is to be laughed at, and that noise and raillery are wit and manly conversation.

Uncle Ben was too apt to regard the world as if peopled only with fools and knaves, or sharps and flats — these being

the two classes of persons who most frequent a lawyer's office. Tom and Teddy had learnt the same low estimate of their fellow-creatures, and quizzed their father's follies into the bargain. On their father's temperance movement they were particularly severe, and vowed that drinking water only made people more thirsty; and one day, when some very gruff and muffled cries of "Don't hear him;" "He likes a glass on the sly;" "Down with him," and the like, were heard from one dark corner of the Temperance Hall, while Benjamin Austin, Esq., was on his legs, John Willis, uncle's managing clerk, found out that it all came from these two unruly boys crying down the speech of their own father!

Since Tom and Teddy Austin were boys of this kind, and were boisterous, giggling little animals, all over, it may easily be imagined that our party was a very Babel and strife of tongues. Tom and Teddy thought that life being one with laughter, a party was especially a place for fun, and whatever their father said they followed up. One specimen will suffice:—

"An uncommonly hospitable fellow you are," said uncle, addressing my father all up the table. "That beef never cost you less for fatting than half-a-crown a-pound."

"And carrots sixpence a-piece," said Tom.

"And the turnips a shilling," said Teddy.

"Hold your tongue, boys," said uncle.

"Be seen and not heard," said my father.

"Never mind, Benjamin," was the rejoinder; "if I get into trouble you have only to persuade the people of Manton to start some new Insurance Company, and make you solicitor, to help me out."

"Insure against being hanged," said Tom.

"Or transported," said Teddy.

I thought it was time to put a stop to this nonsense, so I asked Uncle Ben whether, seriously, some of the many companies we heard of were got up, as was alleged, simply by solicitors for the sake of business.

"All solicitors can't be honest, of course," said Uncle Ben, "though the profession has not half knaves enough for the fools after all. Yes—yes—no doubt there have been instances of such companies."

"That is to say," I continued, "some Messrs. Wriggle and Twist have lithographed a line of rail, and set a prospectus up in type, with imaginary names and figures as a decoy, all to bring business to their own office?"

"Now it is very like you parsons to talk in this manner at our expense," said the lawyer; "but fools draw knaves in your

profession as well as ours. Don't you know the history of certain of your religious and charitable societies? Don't you know that, just as a poor man's club is got up for the benefit of a public-house, so, with precisely the same interest, some of the large London taverns figure also most conspicuously in not a few of your charitable collections?"

"True," I said; "now you mention it, I have been struck with the fact that there is a great deal of eating and drinking in the matter. Aye, last year I had one letter asking me to appear as steward."

"Had *one* letter!" said Uncle Ben; "why, every Member of Parliament is pestered with dozens!"

"Yes," said my father, "and one of the greatest scamps I know is secretary to one of these societies at this present hour."

"A very bad young man he is, indeed," said my mother; "but, all the same, he got a pound out of us for his charity."

"For his charity, my dear?" said my father; "indeed he did not. The truth is, Ben, we are talking of poor old Mrs. Hollis's son, Peter. After knocking about for years as an idler, and almost ruining her, the Captain inflicted him on the —— Society. This society could hardly afford to keep a secretary, but Peter's friends subscribed to the charity to keep open a place for Peter."

"Yes," said my mother, "the life just suits Peter. He travels about the country, and dines at parsonage-houses, and all the rich charitable people take to him wonderfully; but how can he afford such dress and such lodgings?"

The truth then glanced across my mind. I remembered how I had at different times been asked to assist at a public meeting in aid of the funds of some unheard-of institution, applicant being some half-pay officer or briefless barrister, who proposed to drain my local charities for something at the Antipodes.

To pretend an interest in some Society, or to affect evangelical religion by Mawworm cant — and latterly to wear an Anglo-Catholic coat — and flatter one party by decrying the other — all this is so ready a passport to pay or position, that we may well be allowed to be a little suspicious. I could name at this hour a man who has preyed upon society to the age of forty — just the man to act decoy at a gaming-table, — who dines, as he says, at the rate of thousands a-year, in a fashionable circle, as the Secretary to —— Society. Not that this is any argument against religious or benevolent societies; no, it is only a caution against bubble charities, and a caution to the managers of our recognised Church Societies to beware whom they employ.

After the ladies had remained scarcely the usual time at ta[illegible]le,

Ellen pointed to me to observe her father in the corn-field, slowly drawn along in his wheel-chair.

But where was Mrs. Horley, once the harsh stepmother, and long the refractory and overbearing wife—she who had given her hand for a dowry, and reserved her heart, as she said, for one who should deserve it—the same Mrs. Horley who boasted that she had taught "a great moral lesson" to the cruel and tyrannical husband guilty of the death of poor Ellen's broken-hearted mother? Had Mrs. Horley not been invited to this family gathering? or, where was she at this merry moment?

Things were wholly altered. That "impulsive female," with all her faults, had a woman's heart at last.

Mr. Horley *rampant* she could defy—Mr. Horley *couchant* appealed to other feelings. It is true she grumbled: but grumbling, as doctors say of screaming, is sometimes one of nature's vents for divers pains and peccant humours. It is true, she talked of woman's trials—for an extra twenty years on the gentleman's side, when the lady is forty-six, begins to tell a very tedious tale—but, for all that, when she had unburthened her mind with the daily plaintive tune, she would set to work, and smooth her husband's pillow, and ease his gouty toe, and—and, in short, she would not neglect him.

My feelings were wonderfully changed as regarded Mrs. Horley, and so were Ellen's. We forgot the jealous and imperious step-mother—we forgot this sorry edition of the real lady of Bowdon Hall, of whom we had complained so much in days gone by. By this time we had seen other ladies and other step-mothers, and seven years make a wondrous alteration in our standard of good and bad in a neighbour's character, and the sharpest edges rub smooth by time.

"There is much allowance to be made for Mrs. Horley," said my mother: "not that I am over and above fond of her, my dears; but she has been a disappointed woman, and I will tell you her history.

"I remember her at the Hackney assembly; a very fine girl. She was about the same age as your cousin Mary, and she was quite the belle of one season. The officers of the —th regiment were quartered near at that time, and Hannah Baily every ball was engaged five dances deep. But the girl men admire is not always the girl they marry, and several quiet and demure little misses went off first. Three seasons passed, and then Hannah was about six-and-twenty, and single still. Two or three gentlemen were talked of, but nothing came to anything. She had no

money, and when that is the case, my dears, I never think much of any engagement till the fond couple have stood the ordeal of the lawyer's office. Next, Hannah had an illness that spoilt two seasons, and in the middle of the next season the Colonel (her father) died, and died poor. Then her mother took her to Boulogne for two years more; in order, I suppose, to live cheap, till she knew what she had to depend upon. By the time they came back, Hannah was more than thirty years of age. However, she set to work to make up for lost time, visiting again; but gay visiting from furnished apartments only makes a young woman laughed at; and as to looks, Hannah now had little to boast of. And so time passed on, and Hannah Baily, every one said, grew more and more cross and ill-tempered, and some said she had had a disappointment, when, all of a sudden, we heard she was engaged to Ellen's father; and a fine cat-and-dog life they have had of it, which is always the way when people marry for convenience and not for love."

This little episode is worth remembering. Ellen and I, and Goody Keys, were soon standing around the old gentleman's chair. Of course we explained all our plans, and talked of the furniture and arrangements of the Rectory. But knowing, as I did, all the sad family history, it was always painful to me to see the father and the daughter together. The affection of the parent was so evidently chilled by a troubled conscience, and the affection of the daughter by the bitterest associations.

And now the games and amusements of the evening commenced. Three farmers' boys led off with a donkey-race; then Tom and Teddy were seen dragging some sacks for a sack-race; and, some time after, my father and Goody Keys were found pinned together. This made great fun for the boys, though my mother made Goody all kinds of apologies for the mischief.

And so the last evening of our visit at Bowdon passed away; and if we did not enter very fully into the fun and merriment, no doubt our friends are aware that nothing is more depressing than mirth when we want the spirits to respond.

I have now introduced most of the members of our family—by name, at all events.

Brother Tom, who at this time was about twenty-one years of age, was in Uncle Ben's office. A very good-natured fellow was Tom, and uncle was so fond of him, as a good, genial soul, that all his faults could not make uncle give him up. For faults, I shall soon show poor Tom had; the worst of all was, he could never say "No" to any one, and could never keep a shilling in

his pocket. If he had been born, uncle said, like the old Prince of Wales, with a whole nation to pay his debts, he would have been, like him, the first gentleman in the land; but Tom was so sanguine and so visionary, he was sure to have a kind of Irish, castle-rack-rent life of it; and Tom's name was rarely mentioned to my father for fear of making him nervous.

It will be remembered that I had two sisters, Emily and Fanny Bowyer.

Emily was the one who, I said, was born for an old maid, and who not only never had an offer, but—which was a happy thing and did nearly as well—she was of such an unromantic kind of character that I really believe she never wished for one, and never thought about it.

Fanny had made a scrambling, amphibious kind of match. For the greater part of the year, her husband was at sea and she ashore. But Emily lived at home, and took care of my father and mother. Emily played many useful parts. Emily turned the conversation when going in the direction of a standing grievance. Emily made up old gowns into frocks for my children and Fanny's. Emily poured out the tea, wrote the notes, paid the bills, and gave out the stores; and Emily was always in the way of every worry about brother Tom, or other sore subject, till my father and mother had talked it pretty well off their minds.

Fanny, in the common phrase, had thrown herself away, She married quite against my father's wishes; because, like too many other fathers, he let things go on till the warm-hearted girl was over head and ears in love; and then you may as well scold a north-wester, or reason with a tornado. So Fanny was guilty of refusing Charles Chatton, who, she said, was a stupid country lout, and might keep his acres to himself, but she preferred Will Bowyer, a fine, dashing naval officer, who would have been handsome—and Fanny thought him all the handsomer—but for a scar in the face received from the sabre of a mutineer, while he was in the act of choking him off his captain, all but overpowered by the ruffian's murderous attack.

Poor Bowyer had more than once suffered from fever in the warmer latitudes, and the day after our party we were all shocked by the sad news that Fanny must prepare for his landing at Portsmouth, if, indeed, he could rally from a very prostrate condition. Two days passed, and Fanny saw her dying husband land. He was carried ashore in a hammock, almost too far gone to utter an audible sound. A fond look of endearment was all

the response his affectionate wife could receive, when he fell into a state of insensibility from which he never recovered.

My poor sister was now entreated, as soon as the funeral was over, to come, with her children, to my father's house; and Uncle Ben, who had a warm heart and acute feelings when troubles were too serious to be laughed away, immediately gave brother Tom a ten-pound note to set off to Fanny's assistance; and Emily was to join him at Manton, and proceed by the same coach to Portsmouth.

I was now more than ever desirous to take Ellen away from Bowdon: for, she had no spirits to contend with troubles not her own. So, not to deprive my mother of all her darling children at once, when she most stood in need of diversion, we arranged to leave the two youngest till the nursery paint and paper—for this was the grandmamma's plea—had full time to dry.

How little do we know what a day will bring forth! How often do we fear one difficulty when another comes, as if on purpose to cast it into the shade! It had hung as a dead weight on Ellen's spirits that, nervous and fluttering as she then was, she must sit up and receive "the county people," "the set," "the grandees," and all the little-great whom Uncle Ben was always representing not in the most amiable point of view; and now the poor Captain's death came, in one sense, as a respite and relief. Mourning must be provided, and a little time be allowed to pass in grateful ease and seclusion.

Still, Ellen acutely felt the shock; for, a husband to Ellen comprised nearly all her earthly ties. When her mother married, she became separated by some three hundred miles from her relatives: for, they lived in Northumberland; and one of the miseries of a poor girl marrying a heartless husband is this, that she gradually becomes dead to all her former friends. For ten or twelve unhappy years, the Winslow family and connexion had little satisfaction in writing, because every reply they received evinced a degree of reserve which only a suspicion of unhappiness could explain. Then the death of Ellen's mother widened the breach. Not one of the mother's family had ever seen Ellen: and so, being regarded rather as the hateful father's than as the pitied mother's child, Ellen had scarcely ever held the slightest communication with her Winslow aunt and two lady cousins, who at this time alone survived of all her mother's family.

CHAPTER V.

HOW WE ARE *NOT* RUNG INTO OUR NEW RECTORY — AND HOW A VERY KNOWING MAN AND A VERY NOBLE WOMAN SEVERALLY ASSIST US WITH THEIR COUNSEL AND ADVICE.

THE appointed day had come at last for our leaving Bowdon, and Mrs. Bromley not only had the strictest orders not to let any one know of our coming, but also, with a view of making the secret all the safer, she was left in doubt as to the precise hour to expect us.

Very little in this life turns out exactly as it is expected ; and so on that long-wished-for day we had indeed much reason to remark. For, when talking over our new appointment with the Sackvilles, we had pictured the day of taking possession as happy and joyous beyond all other days. We remembered hearing how the Rector of Mildmay had entered his Living amidst a merry peal of bells from the old church tower, and how some of the flags of the Whitsuntide clubs waved gloriously from the cottage windows ; and Ellen, at one time, was naturally elated and buoyant with the idea of producing a little sensation as we entered, and she often spoke of the pleasure of regaling the old people in the schoolroom, and giving cake to the young ones on the Green.

Such was our vision !

What was the reality ?

We alighted from the stage-coach at the end of the village, and walked almost dreading to be seen — because our mourning for Fanny's husband had not yet come home, and Ellen's nerves were all in a tremor from the blow.—We then took a private path to the Rectory, and entered the house at the drawing-room window, amidst painters' ladders and buckets, before one of the servants was aware of our approach !

I had promised Ellen that, after taking possession, she should have a full month's quiet and retirement ; and to that end, I requested Uncle Ben to apprise any families who spoke of calling,

that it would be an act of kindness to defer their visit till after a certain date. Uncle Ben looked knowing, snapped his fingers and replied,—

"Nothing could be better; for, even as a *ruse*, this would be first-rate. Our county people think too much of themselves, and, I dare say, fancy that they are coming to patronise you; but, won't Lady Oxton's visit, when she comes, take the shine out of them, that's all!—And now, the offhand way in which I shall express your wishes, will let them know that you are in no great hurry, and can afford to wait for the honour of their acquaintance."

Remarks of this kind may generally be considered rather as descriptive of the jealousy of the speaker than of any pride in the party described. For, when a country attorney, who for half his life has counted as "town," comes at last to take his "county" degree, he is apt to feel his *entrée* as a matter rather of sufferance than of right; and this will explain the ideas of Benjamin Austin, Esq., solicitor-at-law. Still, by sufferance or not by sufferance, there is such buoyancy and energy in the Benjamin Austins, that they are sure to rise to the top.

Old county families, it is true—not only with their libraries and picture-galleries, but also with much leisure for literature, and a privileged immunity from mechanical duties that cramp and sour the man—do much to uphold a high standard of taste and refinement, and also do no little to stimulate those below them to attain by purchase what they have taken by descent.

Old county families, also, have deep root in the soil, and make fine ballast for the good ship Constitution. Still, where everything is going out and nothing coming in, and human nature does not the less drop stitches, because there are no means to take dropped stitches up, it follows that one or two generations of indolence and extravagance will take the sap from the oldest patrician tree.

Blood is no match for brains, nor style for steam. Factories have come to look down on cowhouses, and manufactures think themselves no less genteel than manures. So, the feudal castle opens its gates to gold; and some Mr. Benjamin Austin has a big tin box in his office marked the "Horton Estate," or, "The Elmore Trustees," and no one knows better than the lawyer that, however pretentiously certain gentlemen may shoot over tenants' fields, or carry the same "independent voters" like sheep to the poll, the truth is, that they are merely playing with the orange from which some one else has sucked the juice.

"If any one would see this world as it is, he must see it either from the doctor's or the lawyer's point of view.

"Our friend Seymour," said Uncle Ben, "knows all the time that some envied proprietor of the choicest cellar, or the finest stud, would give it all for power to digest the beggar's crust, or to jump, like the ploughboy, over yonder stile. In the same way do I know that certain gentlemen of high estate exist only upon sufferance; their banker holding one wire and some solicitor another, which would scatter their goods and chattels to the four winds at any time."

It was a fine morning in September when I first had the pleasure of seeing Ellen with Alice, who was seven years of age, and Freddy, who was nearly six, exploring most anxiously the walks, the flowerbeds, and greenhouse, as well as all the many rustic ornaments of gnarled oak and split hazel, memorials of the taste and handiwork of the last Rector.

Children never forget your promise, and never let you rest till it is in a fair way of being performed. So, the first thing to be done was to point out an old candle-box for Freddy's rabbits, and to find a likely corner for Alice to have covered with wire, rivalling Emma Sackville's pretty dickey-birds.

Of course, we had the usual trouble with the workmen. The painters would leave buckets and ladders, for just one day's work, in some other house; and the upholsterers, for weeks, had some arrears of blinds in one room, and of curtains in another. Never mind: this was all wisdom and experience to us. Up to this time, we thought the only cares of life arose from not having money: now we found that worry and vexation could actually attach to the difficulties of spending it.

The Doctor stopped in his gig to make inquiries, hoping we had found all to our satisfaction, and said that Mrs. Seymour would not disturb us for a day or two. But I was so strongly prepossessed with the sympathetic and sedative manners of Mrs. Seymour, that I made him understand that his good wife could not possibly call too soon.

I am almost ashamed to say—it seems a weakness too much like inexperience to allow—how quickly I made up my mind about the superior nature of the Doctor's wife. You do not generally expect much in a country doctor's wife; but Mrs. Seymour seemed to me like Virgil's Goddess, walking about in the woods and lanes after descending—as if it were an ordinary occurrence—from another sphere. Indeed, with my exceeding admiration and almost reverence for this remarkable lady, I found

that I had a difficult part to play. My own Ellen certainly was a good, dear creature, without a fault that was not on the right side; still, I have never represented her as more than one of the better kind of parsons' wives. Nineteen Rectors out of twenty, I am sure, are less highly favoured than I am; but Mrs. Seymour was not like one out of twenty, but like one in a lifetime. She was just one of those ladies we meet perhaps in a railway train, drop at a station, can't quite catch the name on the luggage, and dream of ever after, but never see again.

No wonder, then, that I used all my tact to say enough to Ellen, and not too much; for, when a man does think any one superior to his own wife, he cannot be too careful for fear he should let it out.

Soon after the Doctor and his gig were out of sight we saw Martha giving audience to two sawyers, who had emerged from a sawpit at the end of the field. These proved to be two of the ringers, who had come with "their duty to master—were sorry they had no chance to ring us in yesterday, but hoped they might give us a right-down good peal this evening."

"The leg-of-mutton supper," said Martha, "is what they are after; but they are civil fellows—all the ringers are—and do often ring for the love of it."

To this request we readily yielded; for Elkerton church had a fine peal of bells, as also had most of the churches in our deanery: and, much good bell-ringing—many a first-rate "triple-bob-major"—was due to the encouragement of Squire Chester, who was quite a genius in bell-ringing, and famed all over the country. The consequence of this patronage was, they used to ring for everything. This brought me into rather a scrape one day: for, having asked for the keys of the belfry, and thereby beguiled me of my sanction to ring, what did the sly fellows do but peal forth a most tantalizing pæan of victory on the occasion of Farmer Jacques taking the law of Farmer Cave, about a blind bargain in mouldy hay!

Then, in the course of the day, every tradesman who had ever served the Rectory—and some others, too—came for orders. Martha had naturally a word for the one, and a good many words against the other; but we readily agreed to give the usual tradesmen a trial, holding that a due regard for vested interests, and the powers that be, is a good recipe for a quiet life.

The two servants whom Martha and Mrs. Seymour had chosen for our approbation, seemed—barring very clumsy shoes and rather short petticoats—promising enough: they were "the best

maidens," said Martha, "that had been brought up at the school, and old master always tried to give his own rearings first chance."

We heard, naturally, quite enough about the Rectors past, and some of their experience was both entertaining and useful.

One Rector had carried his praiseworthy endeavours for the improvement "of the maidens," moral and religious, so far, and had locked up the back-door so rigidly, that the parsonage obtained the name of a prison. It was found as dull and proper as any nunnery—and the maidens would not come near the place after Anne Dawson left: for Anne was the shoemaker's daughter, and she declared she was better off, even at home along with father, "though she did sometimes catch the strap!"

I do honestly confess that the very last place I like to visit, beyond a day or two, is one of those awfully well-regulated families; so I cannot wonder servant-girls cry out too.

So far, all promised a little quiet and repose: though Ellen had been haunted with a dread of those rackety boys, Tom and Teddy, running over on every half-holiday, and thought that—between Uncle Ben's party and the Horley family, and our own, all impatient to give us the benefit of their company and advice at the same time—our house would be like a bee-hive for the first three months. Yet, it was sad to think that it was Fanny's affliction that saved us from it all.

Mr. Williams was afraid that he should soon be removed from the curacy; but Seymour was quite of Dr. Sackville's opinion, that some months must be allowed to regain my full tone and energy, after the exhausting labours of seven years at Lachford. It was only when I had time to repose, and when the excitement had subsided, that I felt how weak I really was. I could not as much as read part of the Communion Service without being overcome with a faint perspiration, even at the very thought of reading the Epistle; and as for preaching, much as the Vicar of Bowdon had wanted assistance, I felt utterly powerless from tremor and palpitation: certainly, it was a blessing I could afford to lie by. For, while the spell of necessity hangs over a man in this peculiarly nervous shattered state, recovery is almost hopeless. Indeed, the means by which I did ultimately throw off this nervous feeling will seem remarkable when I come to relate it.

And now the ringers, after giving us peal upon peal from five o'clock till eight, were called in to supper; and Martha came to

me to say grace to them. Ellen accompanied me into the kitchen, and felt very happy from the association with her once interesting Sunday dinners to the old people at our first curacy at Greenside. Some few words I exchanged with these Elkerton rustics, who made bold to drink our health. Old Ned Adams, the top-sawyer, wished us health and happiness, and said, " he hoped it would be many a long year before he should have to help to lay me where he had seen three Rectors laid already—pretty nearly under their belfry; though he thought it could not be a very quiet spot, for they did ring most loud enough to wake the dead."

I believe I replied to the effect, that I hoped I might, as far as possible, prevent their missing the good friend and pastor they so late had lost.

This, however, in one sense, was not so easy a matter; I should have been ruined very soon, if I had attempted it. For, next day came Mrs. Seymour, and very kindly, yet discreetly, entered into the state of the parish. The last Rector, it appeared, had a good private income, and, while his charity would do much, his easy good-nature would do more; and we were credibly informed, that each sick person he was asked to visit cost him, on his own account, about thirty shillings! and the consequence was, the poor parish doctor had not only more people sick, but had hard matter to get them well again. Mrs. Seymour was glad to hear me say that I had had too much experience to proceed on this plan, and that I should consult the Doctor in the choice of objects.

And how did Ellen take to Mrs. Seymour? I saw at a glance that Ellen was aware she had found an invaluable neighbour and friend in this very remarkable doctor's wife—so remarkable, indeed, that we both kept guessing and puzzling ourselves, when she was gone, to make out what freak of fortune it was that had thus placed some princess in a cottage.

There was in Mrs. Seymour, besides a natural grace and composure, a very halo of benevolence that reigned about her. Her every word, and tone, and movement, was in the truest harmony with all around. To Ellen she seemed as a Sister of Mercy: all fluttering and nervousness in my pale, debilitated wife, was allayed by the spell of Mrs. Seymour's soothing accents. She had such a charming way of talking—though talking is too vague a term. There was a language in her eye, and even her silence had its meaning. I know now where her power lay. It was less to talk, than to suggest and to elicit: and there was a quiet interchange of thoughts and feelings, with the least possible formality of words.

We have all at some time known one of the class of Mrs. Seymour —a good genial spirit in whom we feel we for ever could rest and repose. One born to smooth the aching pillow, to—

> "Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,
> Raze out the written troubles of the brain,
> And with some sweet oblivious antidote
> Cleanse the stuffed bosom from that perilous stuff
> That weighs upon the heart."

And sometimes, when such kind-hearted creatures have passed away, as "distance lends enchantment to the view"—when the weaker touches in the portrait have faded out of sight, and the more beautiful are thrown into stronger relief—it seems as if we had "entertained angels unawares."

No wonder then that Ellen confessed, when that lady was gone, that she had found "a sort of mother" in Mrs. Seymour. Remember, Ellen had lost her mother—had been thrown early—and oh, how suddenly! on the resources of her own mind. Then, she had been whirled into the hard strivings and the sharpest cares of a married woman's life—too hardly-tasked and too distracted to find much solace or repose even on a husband's tender care. And now the void within her heart she felt was to be filled, and her natural yearnings gratified, in the solace, the tenderness, and the counsel of a female friend—one older and wiser than herself, and one who had turned more of life's corners —one who had realised more of its forms and phases, and had thus passed into a higher stage of moral growth and maturity.

CHAPTER VI.

HOW THE RECTOR LEARNS THE HABITS OF THE NATIVES—SEES STRANGE SIGHTS—AND HEARS STRANGE THINGS.

For making a beginning in our Rectory, nothing could be more fortunate than the way circumstances turned out. We were sufficiently safe from being drawn into the giddy throng of Vanity Fair, and spared for awhile from having to break the ice of formality, and sit up in state with a vain attempt to look at ease and natural during a freezing succession of first visits. Also, the same indisposition which compelled me to give over all my duties to Mr. Williams, afforded me time and leisure to survey my parish, and to form my plans for the life before me.

"And now for my old friend's idea of 'muscular Christianity,'" I said one day. "Now for my mud boots to tramp about my parish." Elkerton was a large parish with a scattered population, rather under seven hundred. I soon mapped it out, and found I could make about four walks of it, north, south, east, and west—at least so I called my beats.

Some of the farms and some of the orchards—for orchards there were, containing in a ring fence five or six cottages each—scattered over the ancient manor, were as much as two miles, and many were a mile or mile and a half distant from the church and schools. The paths to many of them lay over a bleak rocky common, and down a certain lane, where no horse that could not be warranted to "starry well"—or, to go up and down stairs well—could be trusted, amidst the natural stone steps which marked that lane or watercourse; for, it served for either, according as the season was wet or dry.

One of my friends travelling through Cumberland, took shelter in a cottage at the bottom of an extensive valley in the form of a basin; the cottager, a woman of middle age, told him that she was born in the valley, and had never been out of the valley.

At Elkerton, and in many other country villages, the seclusion,

as regards the improvement of the farmer's family, and the collision of mind with mind, is only a few degrees better than that of the Cumberland valley.

Enter with me the house of Farmer Milford.

Mrs. Milford had a small settlement in consols, and she and her husband could read of the rise and fall of the funds, and count themselves so much richer or poorer—without very clearly seeing why—in each *Manton Herald*. The husband farmed fifty acres of land, and the wife attended with her panniers the Saturday market, and worked as hard as any servant "to keep things straight." But what became of her family?

Jim and Bill—the younger about twelve and the elder fourteen years of age—once had sundry quarters' schooling in a way which we may call schooling under difficulties, in the manner following:—

The turnpike-gate happened once to be kept by a woman who, as they write up in Ireland, "took children in to bate:" since her departure, disdaining our charity-school, the boys had been, as I found them, tumbling about the house, or staring on vacancy, and subject to educational influences little better than the quacking of the ducks and the grunting of the pigs.

Jim and Bill aforesaid were, unhappily, not born to be mere labourers: no, they were heirs to the aforesaid consols, and were fast growing up to the position, and, what is more serious, to the influence and responsibilities of "young Mr. James and Mr. William Milford, of Whitehouse Farm."

In the course of conversation Mrs. Milford saw me looking at the boys, whereupon she remarked, "One great trouble I have, sir, is, that my children grow up without education. I persevered in teaching them as long as I could, but they are too big for me now; and, I am ashamed to confess, the labourers' sons in the parish-school are far better scholars than these boys, though born to be their masters."—The good woman went on to say that they once had a master in the house, but things were not pleasant, and the plan did not answer. She could not afford to send the boys to a boarding-school; and, in short, she implied that farmers very generally were so situated, that, in point of education, the townspeople, and small shopkeepers, and even the common labourers, were leaving them far behind.

"It is true," she said, "they will spell out between them the murders and accidents, and such matters of interest in the *Herald;* but, were it not for the newspaper, as no books suit them, their little learning would have vanished long ago."

I shall never forget that conversation at Milford's farm; it was indeed suggestive of grave thought, and it made clear as day the cause of the comparatively slow progress made by our agricultural population.

Neither was the hint of the newspaper lost upon me. "*But for the Herald,*"—true—very true—the lone country farm can rarely command any volumes entertaining to farmers' sons. The newspaper is the one and only mental stimulus to quicken into thought, or raise much above the instinct or sagacity of brutes, those senseless boors who swing their legs upon the tombstones, and stump up the aisle after the service has commenced, and remain in one state of doze, however much they may have their eyes open, till the sermon is ended.

"Like master, like servant," is a true proverb: no labourer can be expected to have his wits above half-awake who works for some Farmer Beetlebrow, of Sleepy Hollow. It follows, therefore, that the way to improve the servant is to improve the master: for, the stream of knowledge descends through the social strata, and reaches the last in the series by the medium of those above. In other words, if you teach the farmers' sons they will act upon the labourer, and you will virtually teach two for one: and with this advantage also, the parents of the young farmer are eager for your assistance, and when the school-days are past, the young farmer may be found amenable to authority, and is likely to assist his Rector in any plans for the benefit of his parishioners.

It occurred to me, as I was walking home, that life in farms, remote as they often are, is a very strange kind of existence. The mind is so little called into play, that it is a little more than animal life: all intellect would sleep for ever, but for the strife of tongues once a-week on market day; and what a blessing, when the minds of the farmer and all his family are so far roused to a state of activity, and so far initiated into heavenly things as to be moved by energy divine, and stirred in spirit every Sunday in the year!

After a little inquiry, I bent my steps homewards by the granite quarries, where from twenty to thirty men were constantly employed. Farmer Milford, who was seen to "plod his weary way" towards the yard before I had taken leave of his wife, came up and paid his respects to his new Rector. "Then you have not made acquaintance with the quarry people yet, have you, sir?" On my answering "No," he said, "You'll find them a rough lot: that row of low cottages is where the freemen live, about a dozen of them, with a vote for the borough of Manton; they are the worst of all our people."

I soon learnt what made them the worst. Freemen as they were by civic rights, they were slaves of every evil passion. At every election, these drunken fellows sold their votes for fabulous sums, by standing out to the last, and were never sober till the money was gone. These men, between one election and another, lived by every artifice but honest industry; as, for instance, by petitions for dead pigs, or for a child's coffin, or sick wives and families, or other pretence to draw on a certain agent, who to keep the place warm for the sitting member, disbursed about 300*l.* a-year among about as many independent voters!

It was then that I first heard the name of the Stubbs' family—the twelve Stubbses, who were never bought under seventy-two pounds; and the wife of one of them confessed to me, that at one election she had sixteen pounds in the morning "from them rascally Whigs" on behalf of her husband, who was drunk; and then in the afternoon he went and had his sixteen pounds, "like an *honest* Tory," when he was sober. But, a tale of sin and sorrow surpassing fiction, temptingly as it recurs at the name of Stubbs, must await its proper time and place in our history.

I returned that day about three o'clock, and found Ellen and Alice ready for a walk, and we went to return Mrs. Seymour's visit. Nothing in particular occurred, except that we were struck by two things: the first was, the quiet grace and the temperate manner of her only daughter Mary, a little girl of six years of age; and the second, the elegance and costliness of several chimney-ornaments, which seemed wholly above the scale of her humble abode.

"I am more than ever convinced," said Ellen, as we continued our walk, "that Mrs. Seymour has seen better days; those ornaments are all presents, and as such give a glimpse of the past. I know what she was about when we went in; she was assisting in her husband's accounts and writing up his books; and fancy 'pills and doses' being written by that beautiful gold pen, and at that inlaid writing-table, while the rest of the furniture was quite like a village doctor's."

Also, we both agreed that little Mary was quite her mother in epitome. Only such a mother could have such a daughter. Certainly, I cannot blame parents for all their children's faults, but we rarely err in giving them credit for their virtues when consisting in a certain temperate and agreeable tone of character.

Look into the pure and liquid innocence of an infant's eye. How calmly, how confidingly does it stretch forth its little arms for you to take it! And then, how pitiful to spoil this mild and

innocent, and all this guileless character! True: and it is only a congenial tone and temper in the mother which forbids that innocent babe to grow into the frowning little spitfire that too often proves it born in sin.

And now as we walked along, Ellen was full of her plans of economical housekeeping. She had so long lived in dread of spending money, that it took a little time to give her confidence; and she was often saying that she was afraid she was growing miserly: this, however, was not her nature. Still, economy she felt a duty: so now she proposed that everything should be done at home. First of all she suggested that I should keep a cow; but when she spoke of a dairy, and of keeping a cook and dairymaid all in one, I could not help laughing, from an amusing reminiscence of my mother's experience.

"Now remember, Harry," my mother once said, "never do anything at home you can possibly put out. You and your wife will find quite enough to trouble you without that. Wash at home; indeed! Your house smells of soapsuds, your kitchen is in a steam, and good servants won't live with you. Your father and I have had our trial of it. Once we tried baking; and, what with bad yeast and green fagots, the bread was as heavy as lead; and as for brewing, you know how sour the beer was: but what opened my eyes at last was the butter. One afternoon I told coachman to drive me to Farmer Webb's. Mrs. Webb, I knew, was a very obliging, civil kind of woman, so I asked her to take to market such butter as we might have to spare. Well, Mrs. Webb looked silent; first she cast a look at me—I had on my chinchilly furs, I particularly remember that—and then she looked at John's livery and our carriage, which was nearly new just at that time—and at length she said, 'I shouldn't sell much of your butter, ma'am, I must make bold to say. For you can't put on a linsey-woolsey petticoat, and be looking after the girls at five o'clock in the morning, ma'am.'"

"I know all you would say," rejoined Ellen; "'the sixpenny eggs,' and 'the half-crown-a-pound beef,' must be our warning. I only meant to say, that I am willing to exert myself to save expense."

However, I soon proved to her that there was anything but a saving in these things, and we ended our domestic council with a determination to live rather more frugally instead—well knowing that the dearest economy is that which draws the mother from the nursery or the pastor from his parish.

And now we walked up to the quarries, very valuable for the

grey granite, which would split with a clean smooth surface. We sat down and watched the busy hive of men, and tried to realise the mighty change wrought by the restless industry of man in this our highly-favoured land — how what once were hidden quarries were lofty cities now — how every house and every wall had once lain buried beneath the green sward, till this dull chaotic mass gradually arose to breathing form and usefulness under the creative hand of man.

Mr. Wiltshire, the superintendent, was soon at our side, explaining everything, and answered intelligently our inquiries about the habits of the men. The demand for the granite fluctuated; so the men lived either in plenty, which led to drunkenness, or in a state of poverty, which led to crime. He said I should find but few of them at church, for they had no Sunday clothes.

On this Ellen quietly remarked, "Poor creatures! Well, I have, I confess, known more than one lady stay away from church because the milliner had not sent home the dress!"

And now the blasting, and the report echoed from hill to hill; and then down came blocks of riven granite: all the more interesting to us, as we watched the impression on the opening mind of our little Alice.

One of the quarrymen we regarded with peculiar interest; this was young Sam Brewer. Sam had been a few days before lowered by a rope, some thirty feet down the side of a high granite cliff, to ignite the fuse for a blast, the rope being made fast round an iron bar; when, a sudden alarm being given, the men, panic struck, and afraid of the explosion, all ran off, and left him dangling just above the powder. Poor Sam, realising his perilous position, pulled himself up, hand over hand, till he was a few feet above the place of certain death, though far indeed from safety; when immediately the rocks re-echoed with the blast, stones were hurled high in air, and tons of granite came thundering down below. Then, "as soon," said the foreman, "as my eye could pierce the dense volume of grey smoke which hung about the rock, there I saw young Sam, all alive and kicking, at the end of the rope! He was pulled up without as much as a scratch upon him; and there he is, as well as ever!"

In a new parish you feel you have a new problem to solve — namely, "Given the partial views and private interests of all you consult, and the false appearances so generally put on in honour of your visit, to find what sort of characters your people are."

So I resolved to "give every man my ear but few my tongue;" to judge, not only directly, but by the rule of contraries, especially where I happened to hear any one of the poor speak ill of another. I walked about my parish very much in the spirit of an Irish agent among the "fine peasantry," who resolved not to believe one word more than was probable, from the time he went out to the time he came back.

However, the superintendent of the quarries being a stranger from Scotland, appeared free from all local bias, and his information proved very useful. He pointed out to me John Brewer, the notable Sam's uncle, and said John's wife was worthy of my attention if I returned by the mill.

This poor woman, Sally Brewer, was pining away from a complaint that required lint and linen, nursing and nourishment, almost night and day; and the hard-worked and weary quarryman, though a kind-hearted fellow, made but a sorry nurse, for the labourer can earn no victuals in the day if he does not sleep in the night.

"Sickness with the rich," said Sir W. Scott, "proves often a time for that tender affection which brings pleasure out of pain."

But sickness with the poor brings cold comfort, with waste, want, neglect, uncleanness, and misery in divers forms. Such, at least, was the condition in which we found Sally Brewer.

However, a sharp-looking little woman, named Mary Dart, with some volubility of speech, seemed so sympathetic a neighbour, that we readily engaged her to perform stated services—indeed, Mary Dart volunteered, in addition, to sit great part of the day and do her knitting in Sally's room.

We met Mr. Williams in our way home, and told him of our arrangement. He appeared silent on the subject when we named Mary Dart; and—must I confess it?—after a few months we found out the cause of his reserve; for this wicked woman had the bad heart to neglect the helpless sufferer, and she would actually pick all the meat out of Sally's pitcher and add it to her own: for, we gave both nurse and patient the same, whenever we sent any supplies from the Rectory.

It was long before Sally dared to complain. She saw but one human countenance for many, many trying hours; and how dreadful to have none but fierce and angry looks to meet our gaze all the livelong day, thus defenceless and alone!—But, we must not forget the name of Mary Dart.

As we passed down by the rivulet we saw Mrs. Seymour, with some wild flowers in her hand, and soon little Mary emerged from

the deep sand-hole, hollowed out of the bank, with some sand for her canary.

"All this," said the good mother, "affords no less entertainment than the child's party, with fine frocks and sashes, in a town. Oh! what a pity to anticipate the season of flattery, and vanity, and self! That season comes soon enough, does it not?"

Mrs. Seymour then asked us if we had observed a certain cottage, of rude cyclopean architecture. It made her shiver to look at the hovel—the wind did so whistle through it—being built hastily and slovenly by a quarryman. It proved to be Sally Brewer's.

"A sad case is Sally's," she added. "Mr. Seymour says, but that he must not arbitrate between life and death, he could almost wish a speedy end, to cut short the sufferings which seem but too certainly poor Sally's doom."

I was much struck with this remark: for, many a time in sick-visiting have I felt tempted—but only tempted, I hope—to give others a preference in wine and nourishment, for fear of adding days of misery to any hopeless sufferer.

CHAPTER VII.

HOW WE SIT UP TO RECEIVE COMPANY, AND FIND ELKERTON PEOPLE VERY LIKE OTHER PEOPLE—ELLEN IS INTRODUCED TO LADY OXTON.

It is now time to say a little of the society of the place, and how some called because it was correct and kind, some because it was customary, and some to see "what there could be in the Austins" to run away with so rich a prize from great people like themselves.

The society of a place, however small, is often divided into sets; so, first there were the Elmores and the Hortons—that is, the magistracy and the squirearchy—very influential and formidable people, because they kept the keys of the county gaol, and would "hook them up pretty tidy," as the saying was among the baser sort. But public opinion, as usual, kept the "big-wigs" in pretty good order; this opinion being formed partly of Uncle Ben's jokes—meant in earnest, as most jokes are—about "Justices' justice," and afterwards, by what was called "Mr. Austin's interference and radical defence of the lower orders."

I am by no means disposed to speak lightly of the justice of the rural bench, but—though the feudal castle and dungeon's keep are every year enacted more rarely now-a-days—the magistrates' room, and beadle with a file of *mittimus* ready-printed, with a blank for the culprit's name, is certainly a power that wants watching; and, so far, the Rector and the Justice work well together in our country parishes, and the Gospel tempers the Law.

Well, these families constituted—"County" proper, "the dinner-set," "the clique," "the *ton*," "the grandees," or whatever else the small fry pleased, in their jealousy, to call them.

Besides these, we had Lady Newcome's set, comprising Lieutenant Bulkeley, a naval officer, who used to carve at her early dinners, and join in the strongest nautical phraseology in crying

down all doctrines Lady Newcome condemned. Bulkeley had a sickly-looking wife, who wore a respirator, and pretended that one lung was gone—one of those genteel impostors who cheat us of our sympathies, as beggars of our pence. The Hortons seemed the centre of one social system and the Newcomes of another. Lady Newcome's late husband had been knighted on the occasion of some address to George the Fourth; and though he left but a small fortune to his widow, still, "in a place like Elkerton and the borough of Manton," where people came to keep each other in countenance in such economical hospitalities as muffins and crumpets, and "a little rational conversation," the name of "her Ladyship" threw a grace over everything, like a venison cover to a leg of mutton.

At the time I came there were no Dissenters. Uncle Ben greatly congratulated me "on having no opposition;" but the Doctor took a more philosophical view of the matter. "It is a weak stream," said he, "that turns but one *mill*. Where no people go off to Chapel, depend upon it few are over-hearty in the Church."

And now our first month had expired. Freddy, Ellen, and Harry had joined our nursery; all the workmen had cleared off, and we began every-day life in our new abode.

I have now given some idea of the sets; and it will easily be supposed, that as such visitors dropped in, all who had any distinctive character contrived to let it out.

Lady Newcome came first—talked of her dear Sir Andrew, and how hard it was to be left a widow with four daughters; and her Emma was consumptive, she was sure. She did not visit except in a friendly way, but some of her clergy friends made a regular rendezvous at "the Elms:" there were also the Bulkeleys and Horwoods, persons of very high family and strict Evangelical opinions, and she was sure we should, as new-comers, find it a great advantage to be found so soon in their set.—Hereupon Ellen's eyes rested on mine, as much as to say,—This is flattery, is it not?

After thus exalting herself, her Ladyship began to depreciate us: spoke of our great good fortune—obtained by electioneering interest, no doubt. Well, Ben Austin was very clever—that is, clever in a certain way—exceedingly clever: too much so, indeed. She hoped I detested Popery, and, though I was a young man, trusted that I would preach the truth as it was in——

Then Mr. and Mrs. Horton called, and two daughters. Horton was one of the "haw! haw!" hollow-roofed men—a

man who talked large of interest of the county.—"Your Bishop at my house one visitation—sensible man—he and I agree exactly in most points. Lucky fellow, Mr. Austin—young man like you—to get this place; yes, and you would say so if you knew the claims—strong claims in all gratitude—in all decency, I may say, some people had. But—as to Lord Wansdale, no opinion of him ever again—too false for me—and that by a great deal."

The wife and daughters of a great Bashaw often take refuge in their own boudoir and their own thoughts; they let all his selfish domineering spirit sweep by them with its chilly blast, and learn to look abroad for that sympathy and society they seek in vain at home. So, the ladies inquired kindly for Ellen's children, and hoped to make their better acquaintance, for they had observed them with much interest in the lanes.

Then came the Bulkeleys. The lieutenant had got up a few common-places about the last "Pewseyite Row" and the Patagonian Mission—odds and ends of things as it were, ecclesiastical, just enough to keep up appearances when he played the useful man and a good knife and fork at Lady Newcome's deputation *déjeûners*. And because he was coming to call on a clergyman, he thought, like others—though I wish they wouldn't—that he must set forth a dry collection of lay crudities of a religious kind. Meanwhile, Mrs. Bulkeley had forgotten neither to wear the respirator nor to tell the story of her one lung, for it is wonderful what shifts people make to be interesting. Bulkeley had also seen wonderful service—though he never could have seen a shot fired except at a porpoise—of which he promised to tell me more another time, Mrs. Bulkeley having much to do to get him away before he told it at that time. Mrs. Bulkeley cut his story short, having a small matter of business to mention: she wanted to know whether our young people learnt music, for there was an economical plan on foot, "to have out Mr. Smart from Manton two days a-week at so much a-day;" and, it appeared, to stick into the arrangement as many younger sisters as the poor man would teach into the same hard bargain.

Then came, in the course of a fortnight, Col. Kent and family. He was an officer from India, who, having retired early with a good income and a fair average quantity of liver, was employing his activities as a director of the Catchall Railway, and was quite a public man in a small way. However, he knew the world, and talked cosmopolitan, while others were bounded in their ideas north, south, east, and west, by Elkerton. There came also the

Elmores, the Walls, the Horwoods, and the Rochesters, of whom we need not speak till we have more occasion.

Of course, by this time we had seen other clergymen, besides my stolid friend Williams and our amusing friend James. Indeed James brought with him one day Archer, a man who had lived as a Cambridge fellow till the age of forty, and then took the living of Sketchworth.

Even an Oxford Don, the Don Classical, when old and stiff, is awkward enough in a parish, but the Greeks and Romans he knows so well were flesh and blood at all events; but the Cambridge Don, or the Don Mathematical, has been used only to p's and q's, and abstract quantities, and since labourers and weeding-women are a very shifting kind of data, gentlemen like Mr. Archer in a parish are often rather wide of the mark.

And this is enough about Elkerton society for the present.

As we talked it over, we thought that there were here and there materials to work upon; but we both agreed that Lady Newcome was the difficulty.

All this time we had not said one word to any one, save to Mr. and Mrs. Seymour, about Lady Oxton and her interest with the Chancellor that procured us the living. Fancy, therefore, the surprise of Mr. Horton, when, not long after his visit, the following dialogue passed between him and the Doctor:—

"Why, Doctor, didn't I see a phaeton and postilion, with a groom riding behind, turn the corner of the lane?"

"Yes," said Seymour: "Lady Oxton's carriage, of course."

"Well, I thought so; but what does she do hereabouts?"

"In all probability her ladyship is gone to the Rectory."

"The Rectory! What, to those young people? What should she know about them?—Oh! but it can't be; for I was at the Rectory a week ago. Kent and Elmore have been there too, and not a word did the Austins say about having the honour of Lady Oxton's acquaintance; which, of course, they would not have kept very long to themselves."

"All I know about the matter is," said Seymour, "that ten years ago Mr. Austin was tutor to the present Lord Oxton, and that Mrs. Austin's mother was a personal friend of her Ladyship."

And yet we had not said a word about the matter! and why? Not that we were not happy and hallucinated in the acquaintance of this noble-born and noble-hearted lady, but because "the *ton*," "the county," and "the set," were very small people in our estimation at that time; and very small they were likely to continue

unless they should prove, as some did, deserving of regard, not for outward show but inward worth.

Since life is all rivalry, one set is generally the envy of some other—so we have the Dockyard set in one town, the Cathedral set in another—like City people and West-end people; but "County people" in the eyes of small town people are so great, Uncle Ben thought it wonderful that we were so indifferent. But such are the ups and downs in this commercial generation, that county people and counter people seem too often a distinction without a difference.

Now, doubtless, some one anticipates Lady Oxton's equipage and groom filling up the sweep before our gothic porch. But not so. Her ladyship alighted from her carriage in the village, and walked up the Rectory alone.

It was about two o'clock on a fine afternoon in November, as Ellen and I were directing some little repairs in the greenhouse, when I saw a tall lady in mourning coming up the coach-road. I looked intently to see who it could be, so unlike the picture ever present to my mind of the full fair form, and the yet unfaded loveliness, I so well remembered in the Lady Oxton of former days.

But Ellen's feelings were prophetic.

"Oh, dear!" she exclaimed; "I know who this must be.—Then the trying hour has come at last!"

However, little indeed of a trying or exciting character was there in the quiet composure and the exquisite sympathies of Lady Oxton, who had not even driven to the door "for fear of disturbing an invalid."

I walked down to the gate—oh, with what feelings!—to meet the friend to whom we owed all we now enjoyed. There was a look that was rather aged than old. Lady Oxton was barely sixty; her step was firm and carriage dignified; but her look was a look of patience and resignation—as of one who had travelled far, and borne much in this life's pilgrimage.

I believe I said something of having at last the pleasure of expressing——

"Well, but I have not done much, Mr. Austin, for so old a friend. Yes, my friends, you see," looking at her black mourning garb, "are becoming few. Twelve years—is it not?—have made a change. I hope the air agrees with you. Come, you must not begin to exert yourself too soon; but you should allow time to regain a little of that health and buoyancy you used to have."

As thus she ran on, as one who had too much sensibility to be thanked, I felt that our gratitude must appear in some other way than express words.

"And now I really ought to scold you," continued Lady Oxton, kindly. "You never asked my consent, nor said one word till so many years after, though you married the daughter of my dear friend, Mrs. Horley of Bowdon."

As she said these last words she lowered her voice, finding that Ellen was advancing to meet her.

Almost immediately she had taken Ellen by the hand, and seeing at a glance that her contending feelings wanted a few moments to subside, she proceeded in the same way to find words for poor Ellen, too, saying that even now she feared that she had come too soon, though she did so wish to see us: we must, indeed, have a little quiet and repose: a new house was so great an undertaking—we wanted time, not only to arrange our rooms, but to digest our thoughts.

We soon felt quite at ease. I then made inquiries for my Eton pupil, and compared his present with his past.

"He is quite a traveller and a sportsman," she replied. "However, I have reason to be thankful that he is shooting crocodiles in the Nile, or wild animals in Algiers, when at his age he might have been so much less innocently employed in all the dissipations of London."

And now we led her ladyship round the house and gardens, and Ellen made the most of everything, as the most agreeable form of conveying her heartfelt thanks. The greenhouse, Lady Oxton said, looked very bare, and her gardener should look out a few plants—as indeed he did; for, three days after, came a cart-ful, while Ellen said, laughing with liquid eyes,—

"This, Harry, is a decided improvement on your twopenny nosegays of the Lachford pannier-women."

Lady Oxton remained about half an hour, "just to make a beginning," and promised herself the pleasure of soon coming again and helping with the clubs and schools and other parish matters.

We both felt that our tones and looks of gratitude were not mistaken. Ellen simply hinted, while I ran down for the carriage, how great was her relief and how cheering her repose. Indeed, it would have jarred on my very soul to hear one so generous as Lady Oxton bespattered with vulgar thanks and wordy obligations.

CHAPTER VIII.

HOW THERE IS A FLY IN MY OINTMENT AND A SKELETON IN MY CUPBOARD — AND HOW PARSONS ARE NOT EXPECTED TO LOOK TOO HAPPY — THE WEAR AND TEAR OF CLERICAL LIFE — AND HINTS FOR THE CURE OF MIND AS WELL AS BODY.

I HAD been now between two and three months resident; but Mr. Williams did all the duty. I had once appointed a day for "reading myself in;" but, fortunately, I first of all made a trial of my strength by assisting in the Communion Service, and almost came to a stop. A faint perspiration bedewed my forehead, and my faltering voice caused all the congregation to look up, to see what was going to happen to their new parson!

The state of my health caused no little talk in the parish, especially among those who were most disappointed at my winning the Rectory away from their friends.

"What a shameful piece of jobbery it is," said Horton, "to set over us a poor creature who gasps like a trout out of water the moment he tries to opens his lips!"

The common people have no scruple in telling plain truths, and no fear of hurting our feelings; so Thomas Fletcher said, as he stood between his milk-pails,—

"People say, sir, that you're in a bad way; and sure-ly, when you read a-Sunday, you spoke up as hollow as if you'd no inside."

At these observations on the state of my health I became very uneasy, and I could see that Ellen was making a desperate effort to conceal her anxieties, too. Indeed, she once put a sifting question to me, as to whether a Rector could hold a living if all the duty were done by his Curate! This question I tried to evade, but my conscience so clearly answered, No! that I inwardly prayed I might be spared so great a trial. What made me worse was, that the idea of my inability was now taking possession of my mind. My heart would leap and flutter at the very thoughts

of reading; and every Sunday morning I felt more nervous than any other day, from a painful consciousness that every one in the church was wondering "when their Rector ever did mean to begin."

I now wrote to consult my friend Dr. Sackville, but he only confirmed Mr. Seymour's opinion, that all I wanted was rest and diversion. Both these gentlemen prescribed—as the most powerful of all alteratives, and as Nature's own provision for giving tone to the nerves and vigour to the system—field-sports. They even specified a season's salmon-fishing in Ireland, or a round of cricket-matches with my old friends in the Bowdon Club.

In this advice they had really a strong and literal meaning: however, I did not follow it, because I thought that gardening and walks in the country would answer every purpose; but how far I was right will soon appear.

It was now time to attend in earnest to the education of Alice and Freddy.

Alice had a quick and active mind. She was just such a child as parents are proud to force into morbid precocity as an infant wonder, thus exhausting the brain and ruining it for life. How many of us have a horrible recollection of our little heads having been made a kind of sensitive pincushion for Lindley Murray's sharpest pins and needles!

Robert Southey said he doubted whether, even at Cambridge, it was quite wise to cram young men, and pit them together like so many mathematical fighting-cocks, and exact the brain-labour and exhaustion of a Lord Chancellor of mere boys rising twenty-one. However, I determined that I would not be guilty of the folly of tempering their wits till they cracked, or whetting the edge till I ground the better part of it away.

The cruelties committed at *head* quarters are dreadful to think of. No one lets a common locksmith meddle with a chronometer, but almost any ignoramus is allowed to tamper with the delicate fibres of the brain.

When I talked to Ellen about school hours in my study, and regular education, the fond mother said with a sigh,—

"Oh, dear, no! I hope not yet. I do so dread the time."

Ellen had herself been taught by her father, of whose harsh and impatient character we have before made mention; and she looked back to those days with fear and trembling. She said that she used to be seated in one corner of his magistrate's room, and such were the hours of misery she passed there that, one day, when some farm-labourers were brought in with stolen wheat

running out of the legs of their trowsers, and were sentenced to be sent to gaol, the poor child began to question whether they could possibly be more unhappy than herself, since they were going where there were, at all events, no lessons to learn!—And then Ellen would almost sob while she told how her dear mother, after a very untoward morning, would sit on the stairs and wait for her at the door—for the poor ill-used lady dared not go in—and how she would then clasp her to her bosom, and wipe away her tears, and try to comfort her.

But when I had shown Ellen how love and learning might go together—how minds might be opened instead of crammed—and how habits might be formed by little and little, without any violent wrench and dislocation of the whole nature, the kind mother took an eager interest in the work, and left me comparatively free.

And here Mrs. Seymour was a valuable adviser. She was teaching her Mary, who was twelve years of age.

"And does she not learn English grammar?" asked Ellen.

"No; nouns and verbs, and the simple elements and most obvious analysis of language she learns, of course, in studying French: but beyond that, Mr. Seymour says, with the great John Locke, that grammar belongs only to a mature and philosophical mind, and his Mary shall be tortured with no such nonsense."

"And what does she learn?"

"All that is beautiful in poetry we select to exercise her memory, as well as whatever is stirring and elevating in prose—especially certain scenes in Sir Walter Scott, *Robinson Crusoe*, and parts of the *Arabian Nights;* besides Natural History, and all the wonders of the wide world."

About this time, my father and mother and Emily were with us; and since every one of the old school regarded learning like medicine, and viewed it quite as a serious and painful operation, our humane system was hailed by my mother as she hailed ether and chloroform; but my father looked sceptical on the occasion, and thought, No smart no cure.

"There was your poor brother Edgar," said my mother, with a sigh; "he died almost before you can remember. No one can detest the flogging system more than I have ever since. For, my poor boy had misery enough for a whole life before he was thirteen years of age; and there he lay in his coffin—I could not but say to myself—whippings and all, and never lived to have any of the benefits!"

What mother ever made a more natural soliloquy over the body of her son?

This family visit lasted only one week, which was quite long enough at that time; for, when a lady is making all her arrangements in a new home, she is least of all disposed for lookers-on; and we had always a strong objection to being put to rights. "Advice *gratis* before ten o'clock in the morning," is all very well when you like to go for it; but advice all the day long, whether you want it or not, is quite another matter: neither is anything more absurd than for old people to be always trying to squeeze the capricious nature of young ones into the deep and gritty ruts of their own slow coaches.

However, this visit passed off very well. And now, having all the house to ourselves, and our establishment in fair working order, we might have felt quite composed and happy; but one heavy burthen weighed ever on our spirits, and every Sunday that burthen pressed more heavily still. For, I felt I ought to assist my Curate in part of the service, at all events; and, what was worse, once he had a severe cold, and every time he coughed I could not but feel it a reflection on myself. But, so utterly powerless was I to help, that, even while sitting in the Rector's pew, the idea that the congregation expected me to assist made my heart palpitate to such an extent that I was nearly obliged to go out of church.

If sudden prosperity is not good, here was enough to qualify our triumph—here was the fly in our ointment and the skeleton in our closet. Many a time, amidst congratulations, expressed or implied, on my appointment to the Living, have I felt conscious of something very like the "moth fretting a garment," and then I would reflect how little I used to prize the treasure of health while sighing for the mere accidents of life; and now I had obtained all I then wished for, I could not but consider how there proved to be something better than gold, which, to qualify my prosperity, was now taken away. Then I wondered that I had never heard quoted that most striking verse in the Psalms—"He giveth them their hearts' desire, and withal sends leanness into their souls."

When anything takes firm hold of a man's mind he is sure to go about and talk of it, and ask advice of every one likely to help him, or even to speak comfort to his mind. So I never met the Doctor without telling him of all my symptoms, and all I hoped, and all I feared; saying, What should I do if I did not get over it?

After a time he began to laugh, and to banter me, and say that all this thought about myself, and chewing the cud of my own feelings, was the worst thing possible. "Besides," said he, "who can wonder if, after seven years of parson's work, your brain should happen to be as soft as pap, and your nerves unstrung? Indeed, it is wonderful how ignorant the clergy are of their own make, and shape, and constitution."

"What," I said, "do you think our work is harder than that of other men?"

"I do not say harder; but I do say it is more exhausting to the brain and nervous system. I speak more particularly of the clergy in a town, as where you have been; and, indeed, I never saw such a set of unhappy fellows—so snubbed and cowed into a state of chronic seediness and insipidity—as the clergy of a fashionable town commonly are."

"Why, Seymour!"

"I am really in earnest. I am speaking of the crushing and depressing influence of an ignorant public opinion. Though ministers must be men, yet you are condemned to the habits of women; you walk about as prim and proper as a girls' school with a teacher after you, and call that exercise."

"But we were speaking of health."

"Health, my good friend! Well, when your machinery is made to go one way, can you expect it to go right another? When mirth, and fun, and jollity, are part and parcel of the process of digestion, and all this is voted unclerical, and you are expected always to pull a long face and live on a very short allowance of smiles, do you suppose this is consistent with health?"

"Then is it this that has injured me, as also my old friend Harrison, and others who are shelved as we are?"

"This is partly the cause; but Sabbath-breaking is another."

"Sabbath-breaking!"

"Why, the parsons are the greatest of all Sabbath-breakers in one sense. You all work seven days instead of six. Perhaps you slacken your pace a little when you feel as you say, 'Mondayish.' But that is not enough: the chain of association is never broken. Instead of this you ought, one day in the week, to forget and throw off your work altogether."

"Indeed, Doctor, I never thought of that."

After a while he continued:—

"A new idea and illustration has now occurred to me. See, there; look at that bee-hive. See how untiringly those dull and dusky-coloured creatures fly in and out. That hive exemplifies

your poor brain, and the bees exemplify your dull and melancholic thoughts, in one ceaseless stream in and out of your poor head, which, like the hive, is ever in a buzz."

"Stop, stop, Doctor!" I cried; "your theory is in advance of your facts; for, under such unhealthy conditions, you would expect the clergy to go mad."

"Mad? And so they do. Why, don't they ride their hobbies like mad? Don't the veriest trifles grow in shadowy importance, as if their minds were magic lanthorns? You must not suppose that no men are mad — no brains unhealthy — short of a strait-waistcoat and a commission *de lunatico*."

"But do not doctors go mad, too, by this rule?" I replied. "Think of every specific, and every mode of treatment quacked 'like mad' in turn."

"I do not deny it," said Seymour; "this is perfectly true. All classes of men sometimes dwell moodily on one idea, till the object is seen through a refracting medium. And if so with laymen, it is their own fault; but the clergy are forced and driven to this state, chiefly because their solemn vocation is one that requires most relief, and is yet allowed the least: and that, I say, is all from an ignorant public opinion."

"What you say is painfully true," I replied, "of the town, if not of the country clergy; but I am very much afraid that the clergy at the present day owe this restraint no little to the race of idle, sporting parsons, who now have almost passed away."

"Very likely," said Seymour. "Still, such is the monotony of a parson's life. No duty is more depressing, and no duty more imperatively demands a decided alterative in the form of active amusement, and really absorbing diversion — and field-sports are best of all."

"Well," I observed, "the picture you draw is painfully true to my last seven years at Lachford."

"I have no doubt of it," said he; "I can read it all in your looks. Besides, I meet and observe the clergy at church, at funerals, and in sick-rooms. My work is sad enough sometimes, but I do have a laugh with my lady's maid as I come out, and perhaps a pleasant word with some one as I go in, even in the worst of cases: but the poor parson must keep stiff as buckram, and pull the same long face, till clean out of sight. And, besides, as if this were not enough, he is expected to hear every tale of woe, from the story of the poor man's dead pig to the rich man's runaway daughter, and have sometimes to tell the sad news, and console the broken-hearted, in any case of sudden death. So cheer up, Mr. Austin.

The weeks which have passed are all too little to set you right after seven years of wear and tear, and a kind of dreary monotony, enough to fix and stereotype every idea in your head."

Though this conversation cheered me at the time, next day I found the same dead burthen—morning, noon, and night—still heavy on my heart. The Sunday I dreaded as a day of disgrace, and as an ever-recurring reflection on myself. I was still a Rector, who could not open his mouth! Time was going on. I had not yet "read in." This form omitted, my appointment at the end of six months would be *ipso facto* void! All these fears crowded upon me at once; and, like other people, I was diving into the future, and seeing, far below the horizon, the sky dark and lowering with storms that, after all, might never rise and break upon me.

While in this state of mind something happened to divert us. It was something so comic and amusing, and which occurred so very seasonably to both of us, that I have ever since looked on fun and frolic, and the oddities of life, as part of the benevolent economy of Providence—as a kind of counterpoise, lest the barometer of our spirits should fall too low for the due discharge of graver duties. This theory must be most satisfactory to the friends of stupid as well as of eccentric people, for they may reflect that that is true of the world which Cyril Jackson, dean of Christ Church, once said of his College,—"We really want a certain number of the idle and the thoughtless to make fun and variety for the studious men."

CHAPTER IX.

HOW FARMER CULVER MADE A CHEESE FOR THE QUEEN, AND WHAT CAME OF IT—AN O'ER-TRUE TALE, SHOWING THE STATE OF THE MIND AGRICULTURAL.

HOWEVER much it is the fashion to extol the landed interest as the main support of the country, certain it is that a village like Elkerton might see the same bull-neck, the same low forehead and sleepy look, and, in fact, the same low type of the *genus Homo*, transmitted from father to son, from generation to generation, unless the parson or the schoolmaster stirred them up.

Isaac Hall dibbled "taters" in and dug "taters" out; father, he said, did the same; and grandfather before them, very likely, did the same, too, with little variation but tending the sheep and minding the birds between whiles. All this any other animal has sagacity enough to learn, nearly as well as a man: so, what exercise of the mind is there here? It is easy to say that the rustic holds converse with nature's charms, and that his mind may be raised "from nature up to nature's God." But not without some initiation. An ordinary labourer in the open air no more thinks of his Creator, than the sweeper in St. Paul's Churchyard thinks of Sir Christopher Wren.

But if we would realise how utterly dark a man may live and die, as far as the influences and the stimulus of rustic life—unlike the stirring sound of the shuttle or the steam-engine—are concerned, we should make intimate acquaintance with the few older specimens of the Bucolic character which are still found in our country parishes.

And now William and Thomas Culver are, and ever will be, foremost in my recollection.

The brothers Culver had lived unmarried—having all their corn and wool, and all the money they brought back from Manton market, in common, without any exact account between them—till they both were past threescore years and ten. They were

very rich, and very penurious and saving: indeed, they were too uncivilised to spend money. They had no banker, but concealed notes in all the most unlikely places, and even in packs of wool; and some of Culver's sovereigns were once picked from an old horse-collar by a wary thief! Still, as they were not given to drink, and as, besides animal wants, they were capable of no wants at all, their money accumulated very fast.

The elder brother, Thomas Culver, was of a recluse and silent habit, and took care of the money in his own queer way, but no one spoke on business with any one but the cunning, the wary, and the narrow-minded William.

"William Culver makes money," said Farmer Jacques, "for all he can neither read nor write. Sir, old William is as ignorant as any horse in our stable."

The Culvers lived on their own land, which their father had farmed before them. The farm was beautifully situated in a green valley, sloping away till it joined the Oxton estate. Terms had once been offered by his lordship to buy their land, but the pride of the Culver family, with very old tombstones in Elkerton church, stood aghast at the base insinuation; and William Culver said they could find money to buy land as well as other people, and the Oxtons had better sell them a bit of theirs.

Such being their pride and consequence, William Culver would come and call at the Rectory, and invite us to come and see him; and Ellen was much amused with those ancient worthies, and we more than once had sat down in the settle in their large, well-sanded kitchen — with flitches of bacon and pendant hams, besides guns, seeds to dry, gourds, and the usual ornaments of the farmer's house over our heads — and we had also partaken of their very original kind of hospitality.

The old man was singularly neat and clean in his appearance. A fine flowing white tie and collars, and his healthy, ruddy face, all shaven and shorn, almost made Ellen — who never could think any old people otherwise than venerable — forget he was not a gentleman, however much like one of the old school; and she always shook hands with him whenever she met him.

This affability on our part won his confidence, for all men like to unbosom when they can. Culver had always something to tell us in the half-whisper, and with all the shrugs and winks of secrecy profound.

One day William Culver pointed to a trap-door where his wool was kept, and said (aside), "Ever so many bank-notes where a body would not think to look for them." He observed, he always

gave a penny to every beggar who stopped (as one did while he was speaking), "to turn away wrath:" adding, "They might burn my ricks, or the like o' that." As to charity, little enough of that was there in William Culver. My friend James told me that one day, on asking him for a subscription, he said,—

"Well—I'll think. You see, money is money: a very scarce thing—is money. But then, you parsons would think I'm growing old, and so, '*I must give a little, just to save my soul.*'"

"Poor ignorant creature!" So say all who hear it; but, many a man is startled by the hideous features of his own infirmity, merely because it stares upon him in plain words, like William Culver's.

Culver's love of money was very great; and he was often hinting, "Our Tom is very rich." And almost in the next breath he would say, "Tom's bad—very bad in his inside; he coughs and hacks all night." And then he would say, "And I think Tom will die, and then—*then* the money, and all the land, and all the wool, and all those barley-mows, and everything will be—all, all my own!"

In spite of any frowns from Ellen, and words of admonition from me, he would say at another time,—

"I say, Minister, I've something to tell you. I'm going to have a dead brother soon."

Indeed, this idea of *all* the money being his—though we well knew that the said brother (who, after all, outlived him) had made a will, leaving his share to his niece, a very pleasant person, who would make tea for us when we visited the farm in our afternoon walk—this idea was always uppermost in the old man's mind.

One day, when brother Tom was ill, I heard a boy with a basket say,—

"Please, Mr. Culver, Mr. Ballard's respects, and he has sent a piece of pork to do Mr. Thomas good."

"You march back with that 'ere pork," was the snappish reply, "and say as our Tom isn't never going to eat no more meat in this world."

Such being William Culver, and such his terms with the Rectory, one day he called with ominous looks, and apparently some new and deep designs to tell us of.

"What is going to happen, Mr. Culver?" said Ellen.

"Great things, ma'am; great things, I shouldn't wonder."

And here he paused, and looked, and nodded, in lieu of words,—

"Yes, great things. I have made a cheese—with a coat-of-arms stamped on it—and where do you think it will go, when fit to send away? Ah! you must come and see it, and then you'll know."

However, Ellen thought she would rather know then and there, so she drew the old man out to say,—

"A going to the Queen!! to Her Majesty!!! I haven't told any one yet," he added, when he had given our astonishment time to breathe again, "except only Mr. Williams, and he and I have managed how it is to go, and all about it."

It was soon arranged that we should pay an early visit to see the Royal cheese, and meanwhile we heard from Mr. Williams that the old man was so elated at the idea which some one had put into his head, that no one could reason him out of it. Mr. Williams, however, remembering that he had a friend in the establishment of Windsor Castle, kindly undertook the care of the cheese, so that it might, at all events, come safe back again; which was all he could expect from such a presentation.

Next day we went to see the cheese, and soon perceived that this royal present, to begin with, was only kitchen quality, and also that the Royal arms bore not the name of Queen Victoria, but of that of George III.!

Of course, we said nothing to mar the gorgeous visions which were rising in Farmer Culver's hopeful mind; but we did venture to probe a little, just to see how far his loyal feelings were qualified by ulterior aims; and it soon appeared that a vague and indefinite hope of honours and rewards of some kind was the real cause that diverted some thirty pounds' weight of cheese from its more profitable destination, Manton market, to travel as far as Windsor Castle.

Mr. Williams shortly after took charge of the cheese on his way to London, and I had almost forgotten the subject, when William Culver came to me with a letter, to which he asked me to write a reply.

"It is all about the cheese," said Culver; at the same time he seemed less elated than before.

The letter was from the Clerk of the Royal Kitchen, saying, that if Mr. Culver would send his bill for the cheese, when that part of the obligation was discharged, but not otherwise, their rules would allow them to accept the present, and to inform Her Majesty of the loyal intentions of Mr. William Culver, of Ashley Farm, Elkerton.

While looking at the letter, I saw my friend James in the

garden, and beckoned him in, and we both examined the letter with some curiosity.

Of course we told Farmer Culver that all he had to do was to send his bill, and we explained that the honour of the presentation, as well as the profit of the cheese — far more than we ever expected — were now his own.

"Yes — yes," said Farmer Culver, "but — but — ha! never mind what I was thinking of — but how much shall I charge?"

We replied that that was for his consideration.

Once more he paused, and looked serious and disappointed; but soon, his wonted greediness came to his relief. The weight of the cheese was 28lbs., and he had the conscience to propose eighteen pence a-pound.

"Stay," said Ellen; "only consider, Mr. Culver; you do not charge us more than seven pence a-pound."

"Yes, yes, but Royalty's different," said the old man, who thought, like many other people, that the public purse had no bottom, and the Queen could dip her hand in it whenever she pleased, and that all day long if she liked it.

And now James came forward, with gravity on his lips but laughter in his eyes, and said, —

"Oh! I see, Mr. Culver, —you think Her Majesty is no judge of cheese?"

"What, and is she?" replied Culver, brightening up.

"No, perhaps not; but then her Ministers are out-and-out judges. Indeed, they are always eating and drinking — cabinet dinners as often as cabinet councils, besides fish at Blackwall. And as to Joe Hume, if you charge him a halfpenny a-pound too much you'll have it all packed off home again in no time."

The end of it was, that we prevailed on him to send a bill in the usual way, at the rate of seven pence a-pound; and little did I think what that bill would prove to be.

We had much laughter when this cunning old man was gone; we could not help speculating on the question, since Elkerton alone had sent one queer present to the Court, how many "sprats to catch herrings" would represent the sum total received and refused in the course of the year at Windsor Castle.

And this, we thought, was the end of the cheese story. Instead of that, it was only the beginning.

For, about a fortnight after, I was leading Ellen's pony over the little bridge at the head of the mill-stream, when we saw William Culver, coming down the hill, swinging his arms in a great state of excitement, and walking much faster than his crippled knees — for his two legs formed the letter K when both

together—we thought would let him walk. As he came up to us, he held up a brown-paper parcel, covered with postage-stamps, and said,—

"Oh! Mr. Austin, great things have happened! Oh! wonderful—such honours!" (At the same time he took Ellen's bridle, and turned the pony round the way he was walking.) "Oh, you won't want to go riding when I tell you. It's wonderful! ——"

The torrent of his energies was too great to stem, and I soon found myself again on the other side of the bridge, with the pony turned round on the way back to the railway.

All I could make out as we went along was, that he had something wonderful to show me, the like was never known before—his cheese was much admired; and a letter had come from the Queen, also a fine gold chain, and to be Mayor of Elkerton—which office, by the way, was never known to exist before.

At last, we had all entered the Rectory and were seated in the study, and William Culver was asked to tell his story.

First of all, the brown-paper parcel was opened, and under many wrappers and silver paper, inside of all, we espied a very elegant epistle, and also a long and apparently massive gold chain, with a crown, as a slide, upon it.

No sooner did I take the chain in my hand, than I saw it was cheap metal covered with a kind of gilt.

"Isn't it beautiful?" he said with delight. "Look at the crown—that's royalty—twenty pounds would not buy such a chain!"

We then opened the letter. This was a most delicately-scented epistle, written in a fine lady's hand, on a wide lace-bordered paper of a pink hue, evidently sold for valentines. On the top of the page was another crown, which Ellen recognised as having been cut out of the paper-binding of a bale of Irish cloth, and mendaciously stuck on the top of the paper.

The following, *postscript* and all, is an exact copy of the contents:—

"We, Victoria, return our heartfelt thanks to thee, our right dearly beloved subject, William Culver, for your excellent cheese, this day received, and, in testimony of our high sense of your most loyal service, we do hereby create thee Mayor of Elkerton, and do send thee a chain to wear in our honour, and to transmit the same to thy latest posterity.

"*Windsor Castle,*
Dec. 18, 18— }

"P.S.—Prince Albert and the Duke of Wellington prefer the cheese toasted."

The old man seemed so happy, that I had not the heart to undeceive him, nothing doubting but that he would tell all the parish, and the discovery would be made soon enough. However, if I ought to have undeceived him, I was punished enough the next day. For, this happened on a Saturday, and off went Farmer Culver to the tailor's, where a suit of clothes had been ordered some time before, and insisted on having his suit home that night.

We were not sorry to start again on our ride, to laugh and talk over the adventure alone. As to the question of the hoax, we did not doubt but Mr. Williams's friend at the Palace had done it to amuse Mr. Williams on his return to Elkerton. Mr. Williams not only had not the wit to write that postscript, but he was not the man to take such a liberty with the name of any lady, least of all the Queen.

In Elkerton parish—as is commonly the case where cows must be milked or cattle fed, as well as dinners cooked by half the population—our principal congregation was that of the afternoon. So next day, at three o'clock, as I was going to church, I saw the churchyard almost full of people, and all crowding round or coming away from one centre, in which was standing—gold chain, new clothes and all,—William Culver.

I stood back to give time to all to enter the church before me, and most heartily did I wish, and Mr. James too—for he officiated for Mr. Williams—that the cheese and the chain had been far enough away, to save us from the position we now began to realise.

The church was crowded. As I walked up the aisle, I hardly dared to raise my eyes: for, all the young farmers were on tiptoes, trying to catch a sight of their triumphant Mayor and his gold chain. And when the service was over, William Culver was mobbed again nearly all the way home, not a little happy to tell the story to every one.

He had remarked to me, "Now, sir, you are the first person in Elkerton, and I am next; for I am Mayor: only, I am no scholar*d*, and don't mean to *h*act, but I have all the honour of it."

No one, for three days, undeceived him. Some had too much sense to do so, and some too little. Certain of his family hinted a doubt, but he was too angry at the suggestion for them to say any more.

However, on the following Wednesday I was riding into Manton, and met William Culver on his grey horse, with his nephew, an intelligent young man, walking by his side.

I now suspected something had happened; so I took off my hat, and said, "Hail, Mayor of Elkerton."

"Hush, hush!" said Culver; "you mustn't say no more about that there."

"Why, what's the matter, Mr. Culver?"

"Why, they tell me it an't the real thing."

"No, no," said the nephew: "now, you've seen it, Mr. Austin, and do, please, tell uncle that somebody has been putting upon him, and deceiving him. Really 'tis too bad—'tis shameful!"

"We have been down to Mr. Wickham's, the jeweller, to ask the value of the chain," said Culver.

"And Mr. Wickham says it is only copper and gilt," said the nephew.

"And I thought it was worth twenty pound," added Culver.

"And all he values it at is two-and-sixpence," added the nephew.

"But did he think you wanted to sell it on his valuation?" I asked, at the same time smiling significantly to the nephew.

"No, sir, no," said the nephew; "it was nothing of that. I am sure what Mr. Wickham said is quite true: and, what's more, he pulled out a drawer full of the same pattern, and said he sold this very chain to a gentleman last week!"

Of course, the poor man's friends were in a better position to convince him of the hoax after this visit to the jeweller. I afterwards heard the origin and the author of the hoax; namely, that the silly old man had told every one of the cheese he had sent to the Queen, and of the kind of return he expected, and a humorous physician at Manton was thus tempted to practise on this quaint specimen of rural ignorance and credulity.

I have already alluded to the bill. Shortly after, the Clerk of the Royal Kitchen addressed me, as the Rector of the parish, to say he had sent, by post-office order, to my parishioner, a small sum, for which the auditor would not credit him (applicant) without a voucher (which, of course, I duly returned him), and enclosed a copy of the bill, no doubt, for my amusement. It was literally as follows:—

"Missus Victoria, as is Queen, to
"Mr. William Culver for 28lbs. of best
"Cheese at 7*d.* . . . . 16*s.* 4*d.*"

Which curious document is possibly at this time filed at Windsor Castle, the facts being, of themselves, too interesting to afford the least temptation to draw on any other source than a lively recollection of all the details of this amusing incident.

CHAPTER X.

OUR VISIT TO LADY OXTON, WHO PROCURED US THE RECTORY — THIS SUNNY DAY ENDS CLOUDY — SYMPTOMS OF A CHANGE.

But I must now attend to my chronology. For, I am now writing as at the beginning of December, in my first year of residence at Elkerton. And I must not jump over our return visit to Lady Oxton, and all she did for our Christmas coals, and above all, for the Doctor's fund. For Lady Oxton had learned to be fond of doctors. Her heart and hand ever went together. Her Belgravian ticket to St. George's Hospital was often followed by its noble donor to take tea and comforts to the patient who bore it, and also to have a talk with the house-surgeon on all the wants of the hospital, his own little comforts included; and she used to say, in speaking of these visits, that very miracles of mercy she had been privileged to perform—she had often made the lame to walk, opened eyes that were about to close for ever, and sent back one, else a hopeless cripple, to earn bread for his starving family. Lady Oxton once said that a doctor's charity was like a sailor's daring—a thing perfectly incredible and romantic if measured at each year's end by the fireside and one-pound-one philanthropy of common men.

Lady Oxton, apprised of our coming, had provided an early dinner; and the first thing she did was to show Ellen the wing-room where I and my pupil, Reginald Oxton, used to pass our days, and where she related, with a smile, she "was once so bold as to teach me how to learn my Bible lesson for the Bishop." Next, she told us to walk about while I picked up the thread of many a romantic vision, and revived the fading memories of pleasures past, amidst the shady walks and rock-work that characterised those fine patrician lawns.

I found an old acquaintance at the keeper's lodge, who took us to the chapel, and showed the name of the last lord added to the hereditary tomb. There is something very touching and admo-

nitory in one of those family mausoleums. Lord Nelson, every one knows, lived with his coffin ready made: Miss Linwood, whose worsted work was once among the wonders of London, lived with her epitaph ready-made—a simple marble slab, with her name and a blank for the date—"lest," as she said, "she should be flattered after death." But most persons are anxious to avoid all that makes them realise how, "leaving the warm precincts of the cheerful day," they must "lie in cold abstraction"—"cabined, cribbed, confined," under some chilly mass of marble. Man is resigned to the truth that he must die, but trembles at the *when*. Man knows he must return to dust, but will yet shrink from contemplating *the* dust with which his own must one day mingle.

We soon returned to the house, and found Lady Oxton in attendance on her aged aunt, the Dowager Lady Fenton, above eighty years of age. This lady had evidently heard the story of our trials and our deliverance: this we saw as we were introduced, from the interest which her searching look—especially when her eyes rested upon Ellen—so plainly evinced. I say interest. For, in that wide gaze there was much less sympathy than curiosity: there was a degree of coldness and hardness in her features. Some religious books were lying by this old lady—books which Lady Oxton had been reading to her: but the very name of the Dowager reminded us of that world of feathers, rouge, and diamonds—"the deceitfulness of riches," "the lust of the eye, and the pride of life," in which Lady Fenton had fluttered. She had seen many years, or, we should rather say, many "seasons," for she had led a kind of *Morning Post* and *Court Guide* existence, and had reigned as the Queen of that Vanity Fair, from the demoralising influences of which it had been the one struggle of Lady Oxton's existence to escape pure and spotless.

Lady Oxton intimated a wish that I should take some opportunity, if I could, for pastoral comfort and advice to the old lady.

Yes, "if I could;" but this was just a case in which all clergymen find the task so difficult. It is easy to speak to those who yearn to hear you, ever eager for the things "that belong unto their peace:" but when the aged soul, after one giddy whirl of fourscore years, is cold and pulseless, and draws back as if your message must needs be such as this, "to all men it is appointed once to die, and after that—the judgment,"—then the vague reply, the distant manner, and some topic thrown out of another kind—all this tells us, as it is intended, that it were not

good breeding, indeed that it would be deemed impertinence, as well as being a waste of words, to venture further.

However, I made the attempt. I talked of the day, the place, the season — winter — and then I got as far as the trials and the troubles of life, which made retirement so welcome, and then — how such books as lay before her (taking up Howe's *Living Temple*) — calmed the feelings and raised our contemplations; also, how much there was to make us realise that "the more the outward man perisheth," "the inner man" — the spirit — "is renewed day by day," and gathereth strength and independence, as an earnest and preparation for a future state.

Lady Oxton sat breathless by. She saw I was now coming to the point, and to help me, suggested, —

"And the question is, how to be renewed — how to turn weakness into strength?"

"Yes, I know, child," said the old lady; "you read all about that to me yesterday — but you will be tiring your young friend. He has come out for a holiday, and you are setting him to preach a sermon, I know you are. And, judging by myself, I am sure he cannot like sermons on week-days."

Lady Oxton gave me one desponding glance, and then talked of something else, and said dinner was ready, and so confirmed my fear that any attempt to enter into the sanctuary (if sanctuary it could be called) of this poor old dowager's heart — one whom all the world had conspired to flatter and to befool — was just then utterly useless.

Lady Oxton asked about the sound and vibration of my church, — a question which it perplexed me greatly to answer. I could not forget that the great Duke of Wellington being asked by my friend, Rev. A. J ——, for a certain chaplaincy at the Tower, said, "Yes, if you have a voice to be heard, not otherwise," — and now I was obliged to reply, that I really could not open my lips! However, it made no particular impression on her ladyship, but drew forth the kind remark, "More rest, Mr. Austin, you must have, with change and variety. Yes, perfect rest is what I shall prescribe for you; and you must not begin to exert yourself too soon."

After a while Ellen told her the story of William Culver and the Queen's cheese; at which Lady Oxton was much diverted, but said she hoped the old man was not really made unhappy for the amusement of the Manton people.

She then talked of my Charities, and said, what a solemn dispensation it was that Providence should have given some of His

creatures so much and some so little—and left the issues of life and death so much in one frail mortal's hands! The rich, she said, were God's almoners, and how perplexing were nice questions about maintaining the integrity of capital—about taste and refinement—and about "encouraging certain industry while we spend, but possible imposition when we give." "Oh!" she exclaimed, "who is sufficient for these things? Above all, while one's own dear self not only checks the hand, but even blinds the eye and sears the conscience to a sense of duty."

She then promised to show Ellen some beautiful lines, and hoped that our little Alice would be taught to say them. These lines proved to be the words of Thomas Hood, deserving to be treasured among the choicest pearls of English literature. A lady has a most alarming vision,—she dreams that she meets at the Great White Throne those poor creatures she had neglected in this life:—

"For the blind and the cripple were there,
And the babe that pined for food,
And the homeless man and the widow poor,
Who begged to bury her dead.
The naked, alas! I might have clad!
The famished I might have fed!

Each pleading look that long ago
I scanned with heedless eye;
Each face was gazing as plainly then
As when I passed it by.
Woe, woe, for me, if the past should be
Thus present when I die!

The wounds I might have healed!
The human sorrow, and smart!
And yet it never was in my soul
To play so ill a part!
But evil is wrought by want of thought,
As well as want of heart."

In the afternoon, Lady Oxton withdrew with Ellen into her boudoir, and spoke fondly of Ellen's mother, and expressed herself as most happy in the society of the daughter of one she so highly esteemed; and implied that Ellen should find a mother's solicitude in her.

After passing what we must call a happy day—though a day of emotions almost painful to the breast—we returned with a handsome gratuity for our Christmas charities, and a promise from her ladyship to come and take luncheon with us, and witness the distribution.

A whole day's happiness—all bright without one cloud—is rather rare, and so it proved in the present instance. For, as we drove up to our door, we heard loud voices and angry, and Mrs. Bromley made her appearance in a great state of excitement, and as if she were determined to have the first word.

"Yes, ma'am—high time you've come home, ma'am. Never was a respectable body so used all the years I've served this blessed Rectory; and by a parish 'prentice, too! Yes, ma'am, a parish 'prentice! for now I will out with it—that's what your cook was, and what she would have been—but for me and master, as now is dead and gone, ma'am, to this hour, ma'am——"

Persons who have known great troubles are almost proof against trifles, and we were so stoical as to appoint a hearing in the study next day, only happy to find that no harm had befallen the children.

Next day it appeared that Mrs. Bromley had been acting Mrs. Uppercrust, and the two girls had been standing up for their liberties.

However, this, like other quarrels, let out some useful truths. The name of "a Sunday-school servant" sounds very imposing; but I certainly never did intend to have girls of workhouse-rearing in daily contact with my children. Indeed, when girls have—I can't say lived, but—pigged and herded from the cradle to womanhood, as they do pig and herd in a state of rural or Spartan innocence—then it is absurd to suppose that the essential grossness of their habits will be changed in a year or two by any amount of sums, texts, or catechising.

However, we made an end of this little servile war for the present, and I took every opportunity of showing Ellen English "interiors" in cottage life, as a warning not to trust too much to servants.

Some persons think the Parsonage-house, besides being a soup-kitchen, a doctor's shop, and a court of appeal in parish squabbles, should also be a kind of maid-servant training establishment. And my friend, A. C., for some months did have sundry legs of mutton, sometimes burnt and sometimes raw, at a school-room fire, while Mrs. A. C. followed, morning after morning, with her eyes full of dust, or her shoes full of tea-leaves, in a laudable endeavour to rear housemaids, as well as cooks, from her parish school. But there is no greater weakness than that restless desire to have an infinity of small irons in the Rectory-fire. Teach children their duty to God and man, then assist them in finding a place suitable to their strength and character;

keep an eye on them in place and out of place, and encourage them in well-doing, and let the labour-market do the rest.

This is a good Rector's part; but as to model kitchens, and stuffing ideal ducks with imaginary sage and onions, and thus taking the Rector's wife out of the nursery, and putting the uncontrolled baby-minders in a semi-savage state in—all this I soon resolved should never be done at Elkerton.

And now, soon as Mrs. Bromley's temper, thus rumpled and tumbled, had time to smooth, we enjoyed a good three weeks' run in the voyage of life, with fair wind and not one check; but then Ellen was alarmed by bad news of her father,—they feared the gout would reach a vital part. However, the symptoms soon subsided. No sooner were we free from this great change in our fortunes than Ellen was alarmed by symptoms of another change, that to a young mother is by no means small. For, Mrs. Bromley was now invaluable: the children were very fond of her; and as to no pins in the baby, and airing all its little clothes, Ellen had never known her equal: yet Mrs. Bromley's affections were growing more and more shaky every day, and we now observed that she had only one walk for the children, and that was in the direction of Jacques's farm; and Farmer Jacques was always bringing little attentions to the Rectory, as a pretence for at least seeing Martha. Ellen also remarked an increasing collection of shawls, china ornaments, and a fine flaring tea-tray in her nurse's room, and thence concluded that a change must soon be made in her establishment.

CHAPTER XI.

HOW THE RECTOR SPENT HIS CHRISTMAS—THE DOCTOR'S WIFE A PUZZLE TO ALL PARTIES—A WORKHOUSE INTERIOR, AND THE PARSON'S STORY.

I HAVE now accounted for our sayings and doings up to Christmas, and if I appear to have devoted too much space to so short a period, I must explain that life in a parsonage is in one sense like life on board a ship, and that the first year, like the first voyage, will naturally comprise many of the most striking points in the life and adventures of any Rector.

However, we have arrived, I say, at our first Elkerton Christmas, and the very name of Christmas, throughout the length and breadth of England, tells us of merriment and holiday-making: but we could mention some persons who find it by no means a holiday to them; for, to say nothing of the cook, who has rather a busy time of it, you will generally find that the Parson and his wife are catering and providing so widely for others that they must put off their own family gathering and festivity to another day.

Every good custom that showed a tender heart for the poor I found not only established, but almost pleaded as a right, when I came to Elkerton; and I am boasting not more of myself than of the clergy generally when I say that, as to charges made on the charity of the Parsonage-house, many a poor Rector continues, from the small revenue of his living, what some richer man has commenced from a handsome private fortune.

Ellen would not hear of one single custom being broken through. She would hardly allow me to cross-question Mrs. Bromley as to what was really a custom, and what was merely suggested by that liberal spirit which old servants feel so grand as they indulge entirely at their master's expense.

Elkerton rejoiced in three clubs. We had a Blanket club, a Coal club, and a Clothing club.

Lady Newcome used to manage the blankets, and Christmas

was the time for giving them out. This part, I must confess, was very well done; for her ladyship was a regular martinet in point of order and discipline, and the most garrulous old woman in the parish had small chance of putting in a word edgeways when Lady Newcome was in the chair. It was quite worthy of Hogarth was the group of her ladyship at the desk in the school-room, and Captain Bulkeley acting clerk, almost buried in blankets, and required to report from a certain black book whether any misdemeanors, either of pawning or of lack of washing, were registered against the luckless suitor. Old Cholmeley would also put in his head in the course of the day, if it were only to have a laugh at Bulkeley; for the Captain, he said, was regularly victimised, and it was "more than his place was worth"—and knife and fork, too, at her ladyship's table—for him to refuse.

About fifty pairs of blankets used to be lent for the winter, and no one who has not witnessed how the poor creatures lie shivering on a cold winter's night, and how they throw their own clothes on their beds, or even an old horsecloth, if happy enough to get one, can imagine how thankfully these blankets were received by the poor.—Poor! did I say? A lady and her daughter in reduced circumstances, but still hanging on to the idea of gentility, once had the loan of my blankets, too. Only, parsons—like doctors—can be trusted not to tell.

These blankets were the property of the parish; but as to the coals and the clothes, for these supplies we collected pence weekly, or monthly, during the year, and added (by subscription) a bonus at Christmas.

James Combes, the gardener, had seen many a distribution of coals, insomuch that he was quite handy on the occasion; and after I had remarked that there was rather less than the full quantity of coals to answer the tickets of the subscribers, James Combes came to me with a knowing wink next morning, and said,—

"You'll find those coals full weight, and all right after all, sir."

"How so?" I replied.

"Why, sir, this is charity, this is—best part of it—not as if they paid all for themselves. So, last night, I dashed about twenty buckets of water over them coals to make them weigh the heavier."

I was just going to make some remonstrance—perhaps hardly equal to the occasion—when Mr. Williams touched my elbow, and exclaimed,—

"Then, gardener, go directly and borrow of Cave, the farmer, three hundredweight more."

"La, sir!" said Combes, "why, don't all the shops do worse? They mixes the beer and damps the baccy; and many's the time I've seen our farmers match a strange calf to a cow, or kill a dying bullock just in time to save his life, and no one a bit the wiser down at Manton market by candle-light."

"You said you did it in the night," I observed. "This is a sure sign that you know these deeds will not bear the light of day."

"Oh, never fear my telling," said Combes, "if that's all; for I should never hear the last of it if I did, the longest day I was in Elkerton."

However, instead of arguing, I sent him for the balance of coals, and meanwhile Mr. Williams said,—"As to fair and righteous dealing among these farmers, it is shocking to hear how they overreach one another. I once preached a sermon to them from the words of Jacob to his sons, 'Peradventure it was an oversight,' and I thought that they would never have done talking of it. They said I was 'daft,' or 'crazed,' to think any man could ever go marketing with such maggots in his head as mine—that is, if he didn't want to starve!"

I have never forgotten the impression then received: and though I had before realised the great need of an example, I now felt that the Rectory should indeed stand forth in bold relief unto all as a pattern of righteous dealing, and that every possible opportunity should be seized to show the wide difference between all the ways and means of godly and of worldly people. So, when Combes returned we made some suitable observations, which led him to observe,—

"There was a pretty deal of buying and selling, and quite a shop kept at the Rectory—I can mind it well—in Mr. Walter's time."

"Yes," said Mr. Williams; "the kind old gentleman and lady bought tea and flannel, and the like, and sold it out at wholesale prices, and of superior quality; but it caused much ill-will at the shops."

"Ay, and half of the poor," said Combes, "would not believe but the gentlefolk had a profit out of them. Why, they made a downright favour of dealing 'at the Parson's shop;' and what is more, they did not half like the taste of the tea, after all the trouble taken to serve them.—But you heard about their laying the information, didn't you, sir?"

I confessed that the whole story was quite new to me.

"Then you see, sir, it wasn't as if our Rector had been brought up in the tea and coffee line; so the shop-people were on the look-out to catch him, and if it hadn't been for Farmer Jacques, who came down to the Rectory as fast as he could gallop, just in time to stop the opening of the Parson's shop the first morning, there would have been a fine of ten pounds to pay for selling tea without a license."

I looked at Mr. Williams, as much as to say, Is it true?

"Indeed it is true," said my friend; "and what is more, in compliance with the act of parliament you may trace under the paint, in faint letters, 'Emily Walters, licensed to sell tea and coffee,' on your back door to this day."

"Well, sir," added Combes, "the shop-people were very angry with Farmer Jacques for spoiling their game, and they vowed that they would catch the Parson out in not understanding his business, somehow or other, all the same; and so they did that time about the weights and measures."

"How was that, Combes?" I inquired.

"Why, sir, the officer came along one day to examine George Hodges' weights and scales, as the law is; and says Hodges, 'Now you've seen mine all right, go down to the Parson's shop, and look after his too: that's only fair, isn't it?' Well, when the man came to the Parson's, sure enough the yard-measure for the flannel was a bit too short, and one of the weights for the tea was the worse for wear."

In the midst of my laughter Mr. Williams said,—

"Really, Mr. Austin, this, though strange, is quite true. Whether the shop-people bribed some one to file the weights, or whether they originally sold the Rector some faulty weights and measures, I cannot say, but so it was."

I never heard that this discovery made a case for the magistrates; but perhaps the joke was so good that, after prejudicing the poor against 'the cheap tea,' a laugh answered every purpose.

"And now the clock having struck twelve, the yard-gates were opened for the holders of coal-tickets, and all the donkey-carts and wheel-barrows in the parish were seen blocking up the road. Some few able-bodied men were ready to wheel away their own, but an arrangement was made to deliver the coal for the greater part; still, the eager receivers were not happy unless they followed and mounted guard over the donkey-load, all the way from the scales to their own door.

It was a very cold day, and a few snow-flakes were seen float-

ing through the air, and I was alarmed at seeing so many old people—scanty as at all times are the clothes of the poor—shivering for their turn at the weighing-machine, for I had not forgotten that one poor woman at Lachford actually died from the cold she endured while waiting with a ticket for charity fuel!—A sad and painful anomaly to think of, but one from which my clerical brethren will do well to take warning.

After satisfying myself that all was going on in proper order, I left Mr. Williams in charge, and went to join the clothes club in the Granary, for so we called the place. It was a kind of barn, made compact and comfortable to serve as a common room for all parochial purposes. Here I found Ellen with Mrs. Seymour, and also Lady Oxton, who, I said, had promised to favour us with her company on this, the most important day of the year at Elkerton.

I observed at once that Mrs. Seymour had placed herself as far as she conveniently could from Lady Oxton, and that she seemed, almost purposely, busied and abstracted with the bearers of tickets and the receivers of bundles of clothes. I thought at the time that Mrs. Seymour only desired to avoid the contrast between her plain stuff gown and Scotch plaid shawl, and the more stylish dress of her ladyship and Ellen. But I afterwards saw some little reluctance in her manner when I proposed to give her a more suitable position. However, this might have passed unheeded, only when we talked of luncheon, Mrs. Seymour said very firmly, and with a peculiar significance of manner,—"I have a particular reason for declining; I will explain another time: but you will kindly excuse me, I am quite sure."

Mrs. Seymour, I have before remarked, always was a puzzle to us, and this little occurrence made us more curious still.

Lady Oxton asked, as to the bundles of clothes, whether the shorter way would not have been to have given written orders at the shops at Manton.

I replied that we did give written orders to the people, and that these bundles were all their own choice and marketing: "only," I said, "it is advisable to see that the money is really spent in clothing, and nothing else."

"But," said Lady Oxton, "if you gave orders only on clothes shops, what else can clothes shops sell but clothes?"

"Why clothes shops *can* sell gin," was the reply.

Lady Oxton smiled with astonishment, and said,—"Then you are obliged to adopt this troublesome plan to prevent any abuse of your charity?"

"And even this," I said, "does not prevent it, I am afraid;

but Lady Oxton shall judge for herself. Come here, Dame Hutton," I said. "What shop did you patronise for your lot?"

"Mr. Bullen's, sir, please sir."

"What made you choose Mr. Bullen's?"

"Oh, I dare say that *you* know why, sir," she said with a smile. "Mr. Bullen is a civil sort of a man; but they all gives a drop of something for the favour of our ticket."

"Yes, and his glass of gin is reckoned the best. Is it not so?"

Dame Hutton said, "Yes."

So Mr. Bullen monopolised most of the charity custom, and, of course, charged the gin along with the garments.

When about to be seated at luncheon, Lady Oxton looked round in a way which plainly told us she missed Mrs. Seymour; and, when Ellen accounted for the absence of her friend, Lady Oxton seemed disappointed, and said she fancied she had seen Mrs. Seymour somewhere before. "Where could it be?" We remarked, that Mrs. Seymour was the Doctor's wife.

"Yes," said Lady Oxton; "but that plain dress is not natural to Mrs. Seymour. It seems to me, not a dress but a disguise; and, you know, a village doctor has not often such a wife as that! The very tone of her voice, and the character of her expressions, as compared with the country families around this place, are as Parisian French to the common *patois!*—There is something very engaging in your friend, besides."

We now admitted there was some mystery to be solved as to our Doctor and his charming wife; and Lady Oxton remarked, that if she had seen Mrs. Seymour anywhere, it must have been among her friends in Yorkshire.

After a hasty luncheon, as the days were short, her ladyship left us very early, without anything else that rests in my memory.

But all that evening—now that our surmises had been confirmed by one so experienced in character as Lady Oxton—there was one subject which we could not dismiss from our minds, and Ellen again and again was musing—"Who is our dear Mrs. Seymour?"

The next day was Christmas day. Every one knows as much as I can tell about the services of the Church; and here let me say, once for all, *that certain subjects, as prayers and spiritual advice, I must take credit for, wherever the reader would expect to find them*—such subjects I hold as sacred: and as to the freedom and the flippancy with which Lady Newcome and party were pleased to talk of such things to me, it always felt the same as "taking His name in vain!" It is more to my purpose to

mention that we had our usual octogenarian dinner-party, with a box of playthings from Bowdon, to which Mrs. Horley was a liberal contributor, as if determined that Ellen should forget the step-mother in the friend; and as Christmas is a season for charity at heart, from this time, I think, we resolved to be guarded in our opinions, and less disposed to forget that in the human heart choice pearls may be overlaid, and a rich fountain stopped for a while, though awaiting its time to gush forth again; or, let us say, that the clime or the season may be unfavourable to the fairest fruits, though the soil is kindly still.

"Oh, childhood! happy childhood!" so people commonly exclaim on a Christmas day.

Well, our children always have been very happy, because never spoilt, and all correction done painlessly by degrees; but, certainly, if happiness is to be weighed by outward signs and symptoms of heartfelt pleasure, what joys in later life can equal the screams of delight with which children examine their Christmas parcel? What civic turtle was ever as nice to the man as the red herring, perhaps stealthily roasted at the end of his own slate-pencil, has formerly been to the boy? What champagne at a dinner could ever compare with his ginger-pop under a hedge? Add to this that the later part of life's voyage is ever made with heavy freight—so very deep in the water do we plough along—and all our festivity cannot smooth wrinkles on the brow, which look like sorrow, deeply graven as for an endless series of sad editions. These thoughts will crowd upon the mind amidst all the childish gambols upon Christmas evening.

Next day Ellen had promised to pay a short visit, and to take Alice to her father, at Bowdon, and to report as to the welfare of my family, too: so our party was fixed for New-year's day.

Ellen brought back word that all was well at Bowdon for the present; but the doctor told her that very few Christmas days, he feared, remained either for her father or for mine. Ellen, of course, brought back all the news of the place. It was evidently too bleak for poor Miss Keys; and as she wanted more comforts and cordials than her farm-lodgings afforded, Ellen proposed shortly to invite her.

Ellen also spoke of Mrs. Horley, and said she really pitied her; so active and spirited her nature, yet so deadly-lively was her lot. Still, on the whole, that lady seemed happier with a sick husband, than ever she had been with a sound one. The only explanation I could conceive was, that her former state of

painful irritation had—now there was no one to oppose her—passed into a more quiet habit of chronic grumbling.

But, now for our Christmas party. It consisted of Dr. and Mrs. Seymour, Mr. James, and Mr. Williams. As to the way we enjoyed ourselves, we might truly say with old Samuel Johnson,—"Sir, we had good talk." Yes, famous talk indeed. Some of James's early recollections were very amusing. As he was a man of cultivated mind, and a man of the nicest perceptions, his ideas of the sublime, and his sense of the ridiculous, were keen alike. His high flow of spirits and mercurial temperament never could seem to me half as clerical as the stolid soberness of Mr. Williams, though that good man was dull and heavy in the extreme. The Doctor said, a mixture of the two characters would be clerical perfection, but since that was more than we could expect, we must indulge in a sip of each by turns. James, however, at last, after telling the children a story of a giant, seemed to have exhausted his fun, and became more temperate, and related one anecdote no less improving than interesting to hear.

But I wish I could remember all of the giant's story. Of course his giant was prodigious: there was a whole rookery that always flew out of his beard whenever he shook his head; his mouth was like the granite quarries; his teeth were like park palings; and his tongue as big as the farmer's roller; every winter he had a bad cold, and nobody could sleep within a mile for the noise of his cough; his mother bought him cough lozenges as big as cheeses; he swallowed pills as big as your head; drank his black dose out of a washing-tub; and he was so tall that the maid was obliged to go up a ladder to brush his hair.

"Then how big were his buttons?" said Freddy.

"His buttons were like warming-pans; and he was but a little boy, after all—not nearly full grown," added James, to make his giant all the more Brobdignaggian.

"Have little boys got beards among the giants?" said Alice, slily.

We all laughed much at James's blunder in story-telling; and the Doctor said,—

"Only let him go on, and the children will puzzle him: I will answer for that."

Whereupon Freddy, following out, as children do, all the consequences of any marvel, said,—

"Then how could the maid put him to bed, Mr. James, and unbutton a jacket and trousers with warming-pan buttons on them?"

And now the children had gone off to bed, Ellen and Mrs. Seymour had a little charming conversation in the drawing-room. Every one knows how two dear lady friends do talk, with looks, and lips, and heart, and soul, and all together.

"I should not be ingenuous now," said Mrs. Seymour, "if I did not tell you that I have met Lady Oxton before to-day! I have never been introduced to her, you will understand; but I have been in the same company, and that in a distant county."

"But why did you never tell me so before?" said Ellen.

"One reason, dear," said her friend, "was from a cautious habit; for, every word that I say in this village is likely to be repeated; and I should especially avoid the littleness—so very common, as you know—of trying to shine by the reflected light of a great acquaintance."

"And what was the other reason?" asked Ellen.

"Because," she replied, "in due time you will hear more of my history. I have not always lived as quietly as I do now; and I would rather tell it you when facts begin to speak for themselves, though your *charitable way of thinking all but tempts me.*"

"But," said Ellen, "Lady Oxton inquired for you at luncheon: she remarked that she thought she had seen you before, though her recollection was indistinct; and, why did you run away just at luncheon time?"

"Simply because," said Mrs. Seymour, "I did not wish to revive her Ladyship's recollection; for, the little conversation that passed, convinced me that every word I uttered was as a masonic sign, to tell one as deeply initiated as Lady Oxton that my ideas and feelings were not indigenous to Elkerton. And, perhaps, I was rather guilty of the weakness of making the most of my power of creating surprise in this respect."

"But was there no other reason for not joining us?" Ellen added.

"Oh, you naughty, wicked child!" said Mrs. Seymour playfully. "Yes! yes! indeed there was another reason. For my philosophy, I must confess, is very hard to carry into practice. I believe as a fact, that forms, and fashions, and externals, and, in short, dress, is as nothing; but in spite of my theory, a certain uncontrollable fancy and feeling makes me false to my creed: so my plain stuff gown took fright at Lady Oxton's black moire, and your sable muff and tippet completed the rout of your poor friend. Neither was I happy till I found myself safe and snug at home: though, all the evening, my mind was disturbed at

finding that my foolish ideas had not yet been schooled down to a state of sensible and rational behaviour."

Here Mrs. Seymour was little aware that she described not fancies but feelings—and feelings deeply rooted in the heart of woman. If to "live by labour" is the law, and if life is one state of progress and of advancement, competition and emulation form the mainspring of the whole machinery of this world. And as to carrying this rivalry and emulation as far as dress, whether we go back to the dawn of civilisation or watch the first instincts of the infant mind, we find the savage glorying in his shells and plumes, and the little child displaying her pretty frock. So, what nature had implanted, Mrs. Seymour's philosophy might combat in vain.

When we had joined the ladies in the drawing-room after tea, Ellen voted that the grown-up children should be treated with their story too; and Mrs. Seymour reminded us that Mr. James had once promised to tell us more at length the history of old Andrew Reed—that remarkable old man with the fine patriarchal head, whose learning astonished the whole Board of Guardians, and who was called the father of Manton Union.

"He was a very remarkable man, was old Andrew," said Mr. Williams. "He used to sit near the desk, with his head resting on his hand, when I began my sermon. As long as I was plain and intelligible to him he remained with open eyes; and—to say the truth—with open mouth, too, looking fixedly at me, being all attention to every word I uttered: but the moment that I became abstract, or at all philosophical, down would go Andrew's head,—his palms, as in despair, flat upon his knees—and he would mutter to himself, 'That is not a bit of good to anybody.' One day young Atfield preached for me, and I asked Andrew a sifting question about his sermon: 'Why, sir,' said he, 'I would not give twopence a dozen for such parsons. What good are they if they can't talk sense?'"

"I hope old Andrew is not dead," said Ellen.

"Why so?" I replied.

"I think I know why," said Mrs. Seymour. "Because Ellen would like to employ the old man as a kind of Sensometer for parsons, to go the round of the churches every Sunday in the year: only it seems to me, that when you are preaching, as when you are talking, you have only to look people in the face. I can always tell as I look around our church who is listening and who is not."

"Very true," said James. "I rarely hear a sermon to the

poor but a glance at their faces reminds me of the Baron of Bradwardine's paraphrase of Homer:—

> 'One half his words with Phœbus grace did find,
> The other half he whistled down the wind!'

"But still, people must not be censorious. It is too much to suppose a body of seventeen thousand men all masters of composition, and that, too, in a style requiring tact and experience to fit the taste and the ear of the audience. Every assembly has one chord and one pulse, but it is almost an effort of genius to strike it. But the true secret is to study the mind and habits of your people as a pastor, and to make your sermon on the Sunday an answer or a commentary on all the questions and occurrences of the week.

"But as to my history of Andrew Reed, allow me, as my custom is, to arrange with my pencil the order of my topics; and, as soon as I have recalled all the points of my story, I will begin."

After a few minutes, we had all drawn our chairs round the fire, reciprocated glances, and exchanged words of Christmas joy and sympathy, when Mr. James put on a very story-telling expression of countenance, and thus began:—

"I need not inform the present company that I once was chaplain of the Manton Union. It was there I lost my character for consistency, for I stood up for the poor against the Board. I maintained that they could have no right to keep laymen, or what is called 'all denominations,' from reading in the Union, unless they provided that the clergy should fully supply their place. The Doctor in the play says, that you should scorn to be cured contrary to the rules of the profession, and there is a great deal of orthodoxy and religious etiquette of the same kind; the question being, not so much whether the people shall go to heaven, as who shall help them there: and some said my poor head was all alive and crawling with heresies, because I questioned the soundness of these Church principles.

"All I was paid was thirty pounds a-year, for which stipend I was to give one short service—for such was the economical bargain—however tired I might be, instead of going home to luncheon between my own morning and afternoon duties at St. John's.

"This was hard work; and besides this there was often a funeral waiting for me as I came from the Union, for the poor can

rarely procure bearers or collect their friends but on a Sunday. So, you may suppose, I had not much more time to breathe upon a Sunday than I had to eat.

"All my endeavours to procure an adequate stipend for a minister to give his whole time and energies to the work were unavailing; and some of the Guardians, who said they 'always stuck up for the Church,' asked me if I could not slip in sometimes on week-days, if only for appearance sake, that they might, with a better grace, keep 'all denominations' out.

"This dog-in-the-manger game is played all the world over, and, I think, more frequently in things spiritual than anything else—however horrible this anomaly, and however sad this trifling with holy things.

"With a better motive, I trust, I arranged with all the incumbents and curates, within about two miles, to supply this spiritual want, by taking their turn at the Union with week-day services and visitations; but to this excellent arrangement nothing incited and stirred me up half as much as the case of Andrew Reed, whose history I will now try to relate.

"It was in the afternoon of one Ash-Wednesday, I remember, that I descried a fine-looking old man, sitting listlessly on a stool, with his back to one white-washed wall, and his eyes winking as if they did not above half like the glaring colour of the other. As to this aching of the eyes, he had once made an observation to the master, who told him for his pains that he was 'a grumbling old curmudgeon, and white was plenty good enough for any pauper's eyes in the land.'

"However, as the old man saw me approaching him, with a natural sort of question in my very looks, he said:—

"'Andrew Reed, sir, is my name. I have just been let out of one gaol and now I find that I have come into another.'

"He had been sentenced to a year's imprisonment for stealing money from a letter, and, being discharged with the customary shilling—intended, I suppose, as a small capital to set a man up in some honest way of getting a livelihood—he had the presence of mind to spend the shilling on some bread, and cheese, and beer, and then go straight to the workhouse.

"I replied, by reminding him of the bed, and board, and medical advice, that were provided, and all that was done for him: and I said that he ought to be thankful rather than discontented with his lot; for, some of the rate-payers who helped to support him were almost paupers themselves.

"'Very true, sir, that is,' said Andrew, 'I allow: only, the

worst part of the matter is, that there are rules and keepers, and bars and bolts to the place; and though you might obtain leave by asking, yet, by the time a body has asked leave to go out, or do anything he fancies, maybe his humour is changed, and it is not worth going out or worth doing after all.'"

"That is just like the unreasonableness of poor people," said Mr. Williams. "Why, Betty Small actually left the Union, and lived on twopence a-day, because, as she said, she could not 'buy and toast her own red herring, or get a pinch of snuff when she had a mind to!'"

"I can understand that," said the Doctor: "a great deal of the happiness of this life is made up of pinches of snuff and the liberty to toast your own red herring, and doing it, above all, 'just when you have a mind to.'—That is a weakness of mine too—that is."

"However," said James, "I took up a Bible that I was happy to see lying beside Andrew Reed, and remarked that I hoped he could read and find consolation there.

"'Read, sir!' said he: 'I have been a great reader in my time, but I can say nothing about consolation. Only I am afraid, sir, that if you are the parson, you will say my reading has been rather of the wrong sort. The *Evidences of Christianity*, and the answers to them, too——'

"I stared with astonishment.

——"'I have read day and night in my younger days, and if it hadn't been for one thing—a miracle, as I call it: yes, and a miracle done to me, and no hearsay miracle, and that's the point of the whole matter—I never thought to look into the Bible, or to give the subject another thought, or even to listen to such matters ever again.'

"The tone and style of the old man's mind took me by surprise, and I soon set about learning his extraordinary history—the most interesting case in all my experience.

"Of course, this history came out by scraps from time to time, but in substance it was as follows:—

"'My father was a farmer: he lived about two miles from Birmingham, but the fields which formed his farm are all covered with factories long before this time. I had a good English education, and was naturally fond of books, and of an inquiring mind.

"'The earliest times I can remember were those bloodthirsty days when the French king and queen's heads were cut off. From that time I read the newspapers, and many ballads and pamphlets, containing things that would make your young hair stand on end

if you could hear them now. Murder seemed as nothing, if it was the murder of a tyrant—that is, a king or queen; though there were other tyrants springing up in their places fast enough, as I need not tell you, sir. Besides all this, churches and Bibles were cried down; and the more blood people heard of, the better they seemed to like it.

"'At this time of life—I was then about fifteen—my father apprenticed me to a brazier, a trade that insured some degree of intelligence in my fellow-workmen, and I have given you some notion of the kind of conversation and the violent principles I used to hear among them.

"'But, in spite of all the talk of the workshop, I was no great politician; and as to religion, I had always been brought up to go to church, and to read the Bible to my mother: so all the infidelity I heard passed—like swearing and bad language—as so much wickedness, and not worth any man's serious consideration.'"

"There, you see, there was something to fall back upon," said Mr. Williams: "early education—infant prayers at the mother's knee."

"Very true," said the Doctor; "mothers do as much as parsons in that way—piety comes from the nursery: the Thirty-nine Articles are another matter."

"'Well, one Sunday,' said Andrew Reed, 'I went into church very late, indeed: for, the sermon was begun, and the first thing I heard the preacher say—and it startled me the more because it was the first—was this very sentence: 'Lord Chesterfield, one of the cleverest men of his day, my brethren, did not believe one word about religion.' Well, thought I, while those drunken, swearing fellows said so, it was not worth thinking of; but if a great man like Lord Chesterfield—'one of the cleverest men of his day'—says so too, it is time for me to look into it! So, from that time I began to read all that was written against religion; and in the days of the French Revolution there was written ribaldry and blasphemy of all kinds. What made me read the more was, that about this time I had a legacy of nineteen guineas left me, and I spent great part of it in books—and infidel books among the rest—and the end of it was, that in three months' time there was not a man in our factory that talked as much against religion as I did. I was always talking, and spoke of nothing else. Indeed, at last I talked so much, that the men said they were 'quite tired of it—why could I not talk of something besides that?' but I know now why I could not. Belief had taken such a firm hold of my mind from the associations of infancy, that I kept

on feeling one way, long after I began to reason the other; and it took, I can assure you, a pretty deal of talking before I could set my mind by any means at rest. That point, however, was gained at last; and then, as a kind of compromise, I thought I would follow natural religion, and honour, and conscience, and all that instead — for, there was a deal said about such things in those days — but I need not tell you that my life and conversation were not kept in much check by such conceits and imaginations as these: Natural religion did not last much longer than Revealed religion, and I lived, as it is truly said, 'without God in the world!'

"'What you have so often read to me about those 'who did not like to retain God in their knowledge,' 'being given over to a hardened mind to work all uncleanness with greediness,'—this is quite a picture of my life past. I have done nearly every sin that ever was committed by man, except murder; and I have many a time been in such an ungovernable temper, and joined in such desperate schemes of villainy, that it is a mercy I never did murder too.

"'All this time, I said — as the one argument that set my mind at rest — that I admitted there was good sense in believing Revelation on the evidence of a miracle, only it must be a miracle witnessed by myself; without which — since the histories of the miracle might be false — I never would believe.

"'That the Almighty should perform a miracle on purpose to convince such a reprobate as myself — for, I am well aware, that I was ready enough all the time to get free from all the restraints of religion — was not very likely, you may well say. However, sir, you shall hear.

"Well, last August twelvemonths I was working for Mr. Crang the gas-fitter, when he gave me a letter with half a sovereign in it to carry to the post-office. As I walked along I felt that there was money in the letter, and immediately I broke it open, and soon was spending part of the money in the public-house. In the evening, however, I looked at the letter — for I had not thrown it away — and seeing that an acknowledgment was expected by return of post, I thought that discovery was certain, and I determined to run away from my master and leave Manton altogether.

"'This resolution I formed as on a Tuesday, and by the Friday following I had only sixpence of the half sovereign left; and thinking that I must either starve or return and be transported — for, at my time of life, my work is not worth much to any master, and worth nothing at all from a man without a character — I determined to hang myself, and I took a piece of rope

from a ring in the stable for that purpose. I put this rope in my pocket, and as it was now dark, I went up into the room of the wayside inn where I had slept the night before to hang myself to the rafter; but looking round first, I saw a traveller, not yet asleep in one of the two beds in the same room, and this hindered my making my attempt on my life.

"Next morning, the fact that something had saved my life made a kind of religious impression on my mind; but my desperate condition, I suppose, worked me up to frenzy, and I went out to an out-house to hang myself there. Here I looked round again, but no one was coming, so I stood on a cart-wheel, and having fastened one end of the rope over a beam, and the other end round my neck, I threw myself off for self-destruction. The next thing of which I have any recollection is, that I found myself on the ground with a broken rope around my neck, and my chin severely cut and bleeding from the effects of the rope; and so my life was spared again, and I lost all kind of desire to make another such horrible attempt.

"'Before I left the out-house, I stood looking at the rope and looking at the beam; and adding this wonderful escape to the fact that I was prevented also the night before, and examining most narrowly the size and the strands of the rope, I made up my mind—and I never shall think anything else—that it was no mere accident in the course of nature, but an undoubted miracle, that had saved me from self-murder; and I at once remembered the old argument of my youth, that if a miracle from heaven happened to a man himself—and not only a miracle depending on hearsay evidence—it would indeed be high time to think about the Power that wrought it.

"'All kinds of texts and exhortations of my early life now crowded upon my mind—one of the most startling was, that if 'Scripture be true, it is tremendously true:' another was, that 'the God who blasts towers with his thunderbolts, and swallows up whole cities by an earthquake, would feel it a small matter to sweep before the whirlwind of His vengeance a wretched sinner like myself.'

"'I felt,' I said, 'that I had been saved by a miracle: and if saved, saved for what? The only thing to be saved for was, I thought—what in childhood I had heard so much of—repentance. And then the prodigal son, the lost sheep found, and the conversion of St. Paul, seemed to have a striking application to my own character and my own circumstances.

"'While I was hesitating what to do, I found myself invo-

luntarily wandering back on the road to Manton; indeed, something drew me back, and by the evening of the next day the loss of the letter and my absence had both been discovered, and a constable had been sent after me: so I was soon taken into custody, and at once confessed the robbery. Whereupon I was committed for the assizes, and there tried and sentenced.

" ' In gaol, I had a Bible in my cell, and I also heard some impressive sermons in the chapel: besides this, I received from the chaplain much good advice and many explanations privately in my cell; and having nothing but the Bible to rest my mind upon, I read more and more of it every day. The chaplain certainly gave me much assistance, and explained many things, so that they seemed consistent and reasonable, whereas I had before interpreted them so that they seemed sheer cant and nonsense.

" ' At this time I partly believe and partly not: but I do feel the force of what the chaplain said, that it is high time I should decide, and decide rightly too; for, ' heaven on the one hand, and hell on the other; and the Saviour to save us, and if not to save, to be the judge of quick and dead, are stern realities, while my unbelief of things that are true can never alter the eternal laws of the Great Ruler of the universe.' He said also, that whether I was to be happy among just men ' made perfect' for evermore, or whether all the fiends of hell would one day be exulting over me as one befooled, to my own destruction — this was a thing of which, when once I was dead, no one would know, and no one would care: in short, it would concern no one but myself; so, there was the truth and there the promises, to believe or not to believe as my own affair; only, I must remember, that as the tree falls in this world so it will lie in the world to come.'

" This was the state of mind in which I found old Andrew. The interest, and indeed the excitement he caused in my mind, was intense. He engaged almost all my thoughts, and Paley and Butler — books in which I always delighted at college — were searched again and again, and I am sure you will allow, for the noblest purposes of mortal study.

" It were long to tell you how I brought him round. But among other means, I prevailed on him to begin by presuming that religion was true, and praying much for Divine aid just as a Christian would do, and at the same time to read the Gospels more particularly, and to follow the Great Master in every step of his own life and death. Then I asked him to compare his mind and feelings since he had lately been reading his Bible, with the utter darkness of his middle life. In this way I appealed to his

experience. For, the internal evidence and the adaptation of the Gospel to the heart is the most convincing of all, especially to one who was brought up in the faith. I found Butler far more useful than Paley in this instance: for the common objections of the infidel are of the *à priori* kind, and such as require an answer from analogy and common experience of the laws of Providence. Add to this, I revived early associations, and that the more easily because he was now removed from all who did not believe. Once, he had been the only Christian among many infidels: now, he was the only one who doubted among many who felt the Gospel quite a part of nature and the course of this world.

"You know the result. You know that Andrew Reed died in the faith, and was called for three years Father of our Union; and before he died he bequeathed the Bible in large type, which we gave him, to the Governor, to be kept, as he said, for the use of any aged sinner as blind in sight and as blind in soul as Andrew Reed, who had by the help of that Bible tried all he could to make a good day's work out of a very — very bad one!"

CHAPTER XII.

HOW ONE HEAVY BURTHEN BEING OFF OUR MINDS WE MAKE MERRY WITH OUR FRIENDS—SECRETS WORTH KNOWING—AND HOW SISTER FANNY WAS A DISAPPOINTED WOMAN.

AND now a very critical time was coming. I had not yet complied with the form of "Reading in"—of reading the Service and the Thirty-nine Articles, and declaring my "assent and consent" thereto. It was now the last day of February; the 22nd of March would complete the term of six months, and my poor heart palpitated worse than ever when I reflected that if this form were omitted past that date—my appointment was *ipso facto* void!

I was not the only person in Elkerton who was anxiously thinking of this 22nd day of March. Lady Newcome had talked of it to old Cholmeley. Mr. Horton, too, had been chuckling, and saying, "What a capital joke it would be if this piece of Norland jobbery should end in smoke after all! And why not? Had we forgotten a certain Dean and Chapter in the West of England, who, after inviting some dozen clergymen to try their voices as priest-vicars, ended by electing one who did not know one note from another, and could not hold the office?"

Mr. Seymour heard much of this heartless talk, and resolved what to do to save me. He arranged with Mr. James, one Saturday, to tempt me out for a ride over D—— Down, without saying that there was a Coursing meeting there. He was sure that I should enter into the spirit of the sport, and this would be a kind of fillip, worth a dozen tonics, to my shattered nerves.

All this took effect. Next day, being Sunday morning, this kind fellow surprised me at about ten minutes before the service, and told me to swallow a slight stimulant, for he intended that on that day I should, once for all, break the ice, and read the whole service, and perhaps the Articles. He added, that my tone and

strength had greatly improved of late, and I was fully equal to the task.

All I had to do, he advised, was, to read quietly, to sink my voice, almost to a whisper, if any transient feeling surprised me, but to resolve not to stop to the last gasp. With the dependence of being able so to relieve myself, he was certain that I should by that evening go to bed happy.

I need not say that I did as he so kindly advised. As I began the service, I resolutely threw up my head and opened my chest, stood with assumed confidence firm and upright, and looked scarcely at all at my book, and in my most natural tone commenced the service. In one or two minutes I had nearly forgotten self in those holy words, and in the sacred character of my office.

All went well till the first lesson, which proved to be one of those chapters above all others which every clergyman hopes will be omitted from any amended table of lessons. The first glance at the chapter made me nervous, so that I commenced with a little palpitation, which seemed sure to increase, and my voice, unhappily, had already begun to shake, when Seymour, who had placed himself in the pew just behind me, whispered, "That will pass off; lower your voice, and read with resolution."

Nothing could have been more seasonable than this encouragement and these sympathetic words, for they caused a diversion, a complete counteraction; and after two verses read with some effort I felt quite myself again.

Wonderful, truly wonderful is the effect of a few words from the heart—really warm from the heart—of a good, kind friend. I felt exhilarated, confident, and happy. From that time I felt I could do anything, and throughout the rest of the service my voice, said John Slack, my sexton, who came up with his warm congratulations after service, "was as sound as ever a bell in our belfry—it did a body's heart good to hear you." Whereupon Ellen, with tears of delight in her eyes—for, poor thing! she had been almost ready to faint all the service—told him to come in and have his dinner in the kitchen, and perhaps there might be some left to take home to his wife and children.

Seymour followed me up to the Rectory shortly after. His wife was there before him, her soft full eye melting with sympathy and loving-kindness; for both Mrs. Seymour and Ellen had entertained serious apprehensions that my nervous trepidation would render "reading in," even if possible, painful in the extreme.

The Doctor never could come in very quickly after church. Every old lady who had had a pill and draught from him within three or four months expected her complaint to be inquired after as a proper compliment—all perhaps for the small sum of two-and-sixpence. "I am a slave," he used to say; "I know I am. I am nothing but a white nigger. Every year 'I drag a lengthening chain.' Already I am tied and bound by links of ignorance, links of impudence, and links of threatened slander and defamation.—However, poor creatures, as Falstaff says, they have not 'hearts in their bellies bigger than pins' heads;' and when I and my Mary are snug and comfortable at home, we thank our stars that we were not brought up as mean and pitiable as they are."

At last the Doctor came in and found me stretched upon the sofa, not so much from fatigue, as prostrate from a sense of relief and delight—fallen down, as one would fancy Atlas might, if the world that steadied him had suddenly dropped from his shoulders.

"There ought to be some thank-offering," said Ellen. "I cannot rest till my sense of gratitude finds vent in some substantial form."

Mrs. Seymour's eyes brightened. This was quite her way of thinking.

"And," continued Ellen, "Mr. Seymour shall name the object, that we may do real good to some of his poor creatures."

"Oh!" said the Doctor, with much mock gravity, "you don't know what a heresy you are stumbling upon. Why, this will run foul of Penance or Absolution, or the Doctrine of Works at all events."

"Unhappily, that is no less quizzical than true," said Mrs. Seymour. "So far is the world from following the example of 'Him who went about doing good,' that it is the fashion to decry all Christian conduct, and to limit piety to a certain kind of transcendental talk."

"Yes," said Seymour; "and in proof of this, did you never consider that, much as you hear of ortho-doxy—much as people talk of right views—the world has done without such a word as ortho-praxy, as if right conduct were not worth disputing about?"

"Very true!—painfully true!" said Ellen; "but, Doctor, what will you have? What can we do for you?"

"You had better stipulate for a standing order on the butcher or bottled-porter stores, since Mr. Austin will be so kind," said Mrs. Seymour.

Here we were interrupted by Mrs. Bromley, who said,—

"Please, sir, will you step down and say grace, and after that, I can mind them and give the old bodies their dinners."

"Are the twelve old people all here?" asked Ellen.

"All, except Isaac Kite, ma'am," was the reply. "His legs are so bad that he has sent his bason."

The idea of the bason to represent one of my dinner-party, who was "prevented from giving us the honour of his company," amused us a little.

"Ah! never mind," said the Doctor. "If we had eaten nothing but turnips and potatoes all the week, our craving for our share of a meat dinner would try all the rules of etiquette hard enough, I am quite sure."

I must explain, that we had revived the good Greenside custom of taking twelve names of the oldest of the poor from a cycle of fifty, framed and glazed behind the kitchen-door, to dine in the servants' hall every Sunday. So the Seymours promised to come and help us to digest our happiness next day.

That afternoon I performed the whole service without difficulty, and I concluded that, the charm being broken, I was now quite cured.

This, however, Seymour told me, would require a little more time.

"And now," said he, "how about the coursing and field-sports?—You were told before, that there was nothing like field-sports to give tone to the nerves and to alter the whole current of that vital fluid you have so long been exhausting in the brain."

"Really," I replied, "I did not take your advice about cricket, or a season's salmon-fishing, literally; and I had a natural reluctance to indulge, being well aware that all my boyish likings lay that way."

"And I respect your scruples," he rejoined; "I hate the idea of 'sporting parsons,' but 'parsons sporting' is quite another thing. No, no. A clergyman's life is a serious one. No man not prepared for much self-denial should enter the Church. But the day of sporting parsons is almost gone: the excess now lies on the other side."

And here our conversation ended. If ever my friends have felt what it is suddenly to be relieved from a burthen upon the spirits, which for many months has weighed them down, they then can sympathise with me. Thucydides says of the plague of Athens, that it was so dreadful a complaint, that if any man did chance to recover of it he felt as if he never could possibly die of anything else. I felt as if nothing henceforth could ever seriously affect me. And Ellen, to make the most of the happy occasion, wrote an invitation to Dr. and Mrs. Sackville to pay their first visit to Elkerton.

Dr. and Mrs. Sackville were the kind friends who for years consoled us amidst the miseries of our early struggles in poverty at Lachford, and who also, as soon as we were promised the living of Elkerton, removed us at once from our poor, close, and unhealthy lodgings, to their luxurious country-house, in order that we might not, even for a day, postpone the enjoyment of our altered fortune.—And oh! how happy we did feel at the thought of receiving such kind friends as these in a no less luxurious home of our own!

The invitation was promptly accepted for the week following, and Henny Tinson, the child of one of our sympathetic though very humble neighbours at Lachford, was also to come with the Sackvilles, to derive benefit from the attention of the Doctor and the pure air of Elkerton at the same time.

And now Ellen was full of her arrangements in honour of her dear friends, and was devising all kinds of plans for their amusement, when Lady Oxton called, and was apprised of the cause of our present high spirits, and also of sundry preparations for visitors. At the same time, Ellen communicated to Lady Oxton a little more of the hardships from which her kindness had rescued us. This she told, partly from her own ingenuous nature and partly to vent her feelings of admiration and gratitude due to friends so true in our utmost need.

Lady Oxton immediately remarked, that one day at Norlands would no doubt amuse our excellent visitors, and she should be delighted to see them, and left it to us to fix the day at our leisure.

This proposal took Ellen quite by surprise. She remembered that Mrs. Sackville was rather hearty than refined, and she therefore felt in duty bound delicately to hint the fact, and also to say that they were good, plain kind of people, but not quite accustomed to move in the circle of ——

"I understand you, my dear," said Lady Oxton; "but never mind: your friend must be one of nature's gentlewomen. It has been my fate, all my life, to associate with too many persons whose gentility was anything but what it should be—Christianity in little things—the spontaneous expression of a gentle heart. So, being now assured of her gentle feelings, I shall deem it a slight matter to bear with a little homely heartiness, or it may be humility, of manner and address."

I will not speak of this as condescension—I dislike that term. I call it a pure and healthy feeling for our fellow-creatures. Still, I knew how flattering it would be to our friends—not so

much to the Doctor, perhaps. His head was too full of science and of substance to be much borne away by the mere forms and shadows of life; but, Mrs. Sackville would be made happy for life at being able to talk of her visit to great people: and, we were not sorry we had an opportunity of indulging her. For, after all, the weakness is a very natural one, and one to which few persons are too wise or too philosophical to yield. Indeed we were ourselves, if the truth were told, rather pleased than otherwise that those who depreciated us, because poor, at Lachford, should hear from Mrs. Sackville a glowing account of the style and the society of Elkerton.

In due time our kind friends, Dr. and Mrs. Sackville and Henny Tinson, arrived.

As to words to describe feelings and expressions of welcome on the one part, or of congratulations on the other—still less to chronicle the starts of surprise, or notes of admiration, elicited by all that met their eye—this were of course impossible. But, as to the scraps of news from my former parish, and matters which the lady had laid in for a fortnight's talk, the following may serve as a specimen:—

"Your old pensioner, Widow Brown, is still alive—turned ninety-two. She had a fall last winter, but that did her good: it kept her out of the frost and cold.

"Mrs. Child, you know, was always so crabbed and sour: no wonder. She died last week of an inward tumour, which had been gnawing away for years!

"That abominable old Thornhill, everybody says, ought to be cut; but instead of defending his conduct, he multiplies his parties. Lachford people are never particular about character, as long as they are fed. Though nothing could be worse: he made the old woman sign away her money, and won't marry her after all.

"Mr. Short's second daughter has eloped with Sison, the music-master: and people don't pity them in the least: they say it is high time the Shorts' pride was taken down a peg.

"You remember that Dr. Mills was the most unpunctual man in the place. We once asked him to dine at six o'clock on a Monday, and he did not come till seven o'clock on the Tuesday!—Well, poor Nat Bingham, the Secretary of the Infirmary, was waiting for Dr. Mills to audit the accounts—which he knew were all wrong. The Doctor came ten minutes after his time, and found Nat hanging behind the door; but as he wasn't cold, a little more punctuality would have saved him his life.

"Mrs. Still, the widow, who married the captain, was robbed

of twenty pounds; but it proved to be a hoarded bank-note, fifteen years old; and so the trial showed her wild young man that his confiding wife had been scraping together a private store, by entering, as some said, double soap and soda, or legs of mutton. This amused people mightily."

Dr. Sackville congratulated me on my improved appearance in tone and strength.

"Still," he said, "you must retain your curate, and lay in a store of health and vigour. For you seem to me—what with family affairs and trusteeships within doors, and clubs, lectures, and feeding or physicking all the parish without—to have an increasing number of exciting duties.

"Now this," he continued, "must fret and wear the complex machinery of man. The quiet village pastor is a thing of poetry or of the past. A modern Rector is a jack-of-all-trades. The Apostles were impatient of 'serving tables,' or keeping charity accounts; but now, Society uses you as notaries to sign pensioners' warrants, and by its many claims and calls on your time in all social questions and local improvement, Society, first of all, secularises the parson, and then cries out because he is secular—first of all it works and worries him out of all pastoral tone and temper, and then it complains because he is not a pattern of perfect serenity and sheepishness.

"I say, therefore, that a clergyman requires even more health and vigour than other men: yet I daily see more and more of the cadaverous and atrabilious cast. Why, where is the difference, whether you neglect your parish from sloth and indolence, or whether you neglect your health till your parish is involved in your own ruin?"

When my friends were gone, I reflected seriously on this good advice. It seemed to me at the time quite original; but I soon was reminded of words which implied the same truth in another way. "So run that ye may obtain,"—so labour that you may prevail. And yet I have a painful recollection of "so running," or rather dragging my exhausted limbs from one cottage to another—hundreds of clergymen are doing the same at this very hour—as to have little hope of "obtaining" or producing any effect at all. For, without vital force and energy to wing the words as from heart to heart—without intensity and earnestness, the dull and unlettered mind is rarely stirred to the depths we ought to reach.

We read also, "Every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things." And shall a clergyman not be tempe-

rate—shall he not refrain from hours often unnecessary in a dark, ill-ventilated study? Shall he not rise with the lark and inhale the morning air upon the hills? Remember, my brethren, these things very often you can do, and it is a duty to do them. Light, air, exercise, and the first principles of health, surely it is discreditable to any man of education at the present day not to understand.

But it is chiefly because you do not understand the principles of health, that, at a meeting of the clergy in any city church, it seems as if you had been summoned rather from the vaults beneath than the parishes around—less akin to the living than the dead!

And in so speaking, I mean no affectation of "muscular Christianity," but only healthy Christianity, and able-bodied Christianity. I would see a set of strong and stirring, instead of soft and sallow men—though men—things are coming to such a pass—the world soon will cease to call them. No one would believe as he looks at my friend J—— J——, that he was the same man who was the pride of the old Magdalene Club, and pulled stroke in his college boat!

If all this were fair wear and tear—if it were rubbing out and not rusting out, as in some cases it doubtless is—then all honour were due to the men willing to spend and be spent in the one good cause. But I am compelled to say, that no little of it arises from your own disregard of the plainest sanitary laws, as also from yielding to that false public opinion that regards manly exercises not as natural, but as childish, and condemns you to a mere milestone-measured walk, where you never can really unbend the mind.

After the Sackvilles had left us, bad accounts of Mr. Horley's health drew Ellen for a while to Bowdon, and sister Fanny and Goody Keys came to keep me company and take care of the house. At this time Fanny had been nine months a widow; and, much as she felt the loss of poor Bowyer, nine months is too long a time for the more violent stages of sorrow, and Fanny had reached the stage of talkativeness.

"For the first fortnight," said Fanny, "I was in one hoot of grief, and that impudent parrot learnt to imitate me; but after that, the clerks of the Admiralty made me so angry with them, I really believe it acted as a diversion; and then the difficulty about my pension, and having positively to prove I was poor Willie's lawful wife before they would pay me a shilling; and then the nomination to the Navy School for Edwin, and twenty letters

to write—plaguing every one I knew to plague every one they knew for votes—all this kept my head in a whirl; and you can't grieve for the past, be out of temper with the present, and anxious about the future, all at the same time, that is very plain. As to missing poor Willie—to miss him much was out of the question: for I had been used to miss him ten months out of the twelve every year since I had been married. Thirteen weeks in the first nine years is all the time he ever passed with me: and pretty fast I travelled more than once to secure even as much of his company as this! Once I crossed in a fishing-boat, in a gale of wind, from Tenby to Ilfracombe: and once I posted down to Falmouth, and never met him after all! Uncle Ben said truly enough that we were a kind of amphibious couple, and that the alliance was like that of a fowl and a duck; but all this I knew before, and this I took my chance of, and looked forward to the time when he would have some duty ashore. He might be made harbour-master, I hoped; or even a lighthouse I would have put up with. Anything to see him settle down quietly, after all his wanderings by sea, and all my scrambling contrivances ashore—ever watching the way of the wind and the stations of her Majesty's navy: but just then, in the midst of all my eager hopes, death cut the tie! Oh, dear me! Had ever a woman such a widowed life as mine?"

I remarked to Fanny that we were not only born to labour, but this round world is a kind of treadmill—all its turns and revolutions do so keep us toiling upwards, and very often not the higher for our efforts. Indeed, we may say that the world is a kind of workhouse, in which poverty separates husband and wife very often.

"Yes," said Miss Keys, "Fanny's is a thrice-told tale. There are so many things to make happiness in married life; I scarcely ever saw all united in one person. Temper and amability are rare; and then, a fortune is rare; and, besides plain goodness, fancy must be suited, and ——"

"But fancy must almost always be served first," said Fanny.

"And then there are habits to be matched," continued Miss Keys.

"Like a bird, and a fish," I suggested.

"Yes; but you young people don't know the old-fashioned pictures of Hogarth, though I never can forget the two dogs in the corner of the room with the ill-matched couple. The poor creatures are chained neck to neck, and while the one wants only to be quiet and go to sleep, the other is all alive and struggling to be free."

While Fanny and Miss Keys could take care of the house, I thought it a fair opportunity for a little excursion, and some diversion to change the scene. Accordingly, I wrote to my old friend, John Marshall, President of the No-Buffoonery Cricket Club, to inquire if he knew of any match sufficiently Parsonic for me to take a part in. I confess I felt rather undignified in proposing such a thing; for, at that time, my spiked shoes were covered with fine blue mould, my flannels were the worse for the moth, and my bat was all coated with dust and cobwebs; and I was myself quite mouldy and rusty, too. I had quite lost the relish and the idea of the thing. Cowed by ten years of frowns clerical, and positively old before my time.

While such and so "correct" were my feelings, down came old Johnny in his dog-cart, to give me a reply in his own hearty way, by word of mouth. He said,—

"Nothing could be more lucky. We are just going to make 'a cricket-week' of it—a fortnight, I might more truly say. So, pack up your traps, and come back with me to my house, and be ready to start early to-morrow morning for Queenley Park."

"Queenley Park?" I replied: "why, that is where we played a match just eighteen years ago!"

"Of course it is," he said, "and I have played there every year since; and, don't you remember that old Charlie Golightly could not play with us, being wanted at home, and because, as we said, a young cricketer was coming into the world?"

"I do remember it," I rejoined.

"Well, young Charlie—that is," said he, "Charlie's just eighteen; and he is our best field, and has hands like a rat-trap: you'll see him to-morrow. But, where are your traps? If not in order, I can lend you some bags, and some pads, too."

"Bags!" I said; "what are they?"

"Bags? Why flannels, to be sure!—How slow you are grown! it is high time you had a good shake up."

"And do you think I shall want padding?"

"Oh, you must have leggings. Atfield may bowl against us; and he breaks stumps very often—three sets last year—and crippled one man for three months: but, as it happened at the end of the season, of course it did not matter. But we'll practise this afternoon in my field, and you will soon get into your play."

While luncheon was being prepared I brought down my bat; the identical piece of willow with which, in college days, "85, *not out*," was once scored to the honor of Austin of Trinity.

The power of the association of ideas in the sporting way is

something miraculous: for, as Æschylus says, already the marrow of youth was surging within my breast: and, by the time I had begun to handle my favourite bat, and had made one or two imaginary cuts and leg-hits on the carpet, the tide of old recollections and joyous emotions came rolling in, billow upon billow, most buoyantly on my mind, while our eyes were glistening and pulses beating quicker and quicker as we talked "of some rattling good match" in days gone by.

I was now quite another man. I should say I was a complete man; for I had not been above half a man for some years, and now I felt sundry powers and divers energies, both as Milton's lion, that rampant shakes his brinded mane while pawing to get free,—I could hardly eat my luncheon for excitement, but John ate all the heartier.

After a couple of hours I had made all my arrangements for a parson's week, and was ready to start. But John wore such a wide-awake hat, and looked altogether so little like clerical company, that I made a short cut across my fields, and joined him when clear of my parish. He was not at all offended at my being ashamed of his company, though he said I didn't look at all easy in my mind for the first mile or two, but rather like a boy skulking away from school.

We had some improving practice together on the lawn that evening, and I began more and more to feel the use of my arms and legs, and also to be conscious at last of quite a sanguine glow about the match of the morrow.

Next morning we waited, at nine o'clock, at the corner of the lane for the drag, and a very stylish affair it was. Four greys and two postilions, in a kind of break, in which sat all our party —not very appropriately styled the "No-Buffooneries," I must say; for of all the crinkum-crankum hats and queer toggery I ever saw, nothing ever came up to it. One man had a hat like Guy Faux's, and one seemed to have copied some Spanish brigand's; and as to their fun and merriment as we went along, that was quite original enough to match their externals. All this made the scene to me a novelty and a diversion indeed; and we galloped away for two hours in so light-hearted a humour, that I could not help thinking how I had been most unnecessarily conjuring up the ugliest ghosts imaginable, and filling the lonely chambers of my mind with sad and gloomy pictures, having no counterpart in nature for some years past. Already I was conscious of an unwonted glow, as if quicksilver were running in my veins, and an electric current charging my cerebellum; and I

felt distinctly that my head had been all cinders and sawdust for many a long day, and that I was now in a fair way of shaking out and airing every damp and dusty corner of my upper story. For, really, I had scarcely had a thorough "turning-out day" ever since I had been in Holy Orders; though I was not at all aware how my mind had become clogged and crusted over till I now heard the true soul-music of a hearty laugh—To say the truth, when first I heard this unaccustomed sound as the joyous echo of former days, I was not free from some qualms and compunctions clerical, so potent is the spell of habit.

A very pleasant set of young fellows they were, but of all sorts and sizes: young Charlie weighed under eight stone, and Captain Clarke—on sick leave from India—weighed, liver and all, nearly fifteen; and told us how many runs he had made, and how much Bass's ale he once got through in the same morning, under the walls of Delhi. As we neared the ground, the post-boys, having been told "to keep a-trot for the avenue," rode spurring on at a dashing pace. There was a head out of many a door—a match at Sir Arthur's was a great event indeed in these parts—and some gave us three cheers in token of their sympathy, and every rustic looked at us, as much as to say, as one we heard did say, "There they goes—crickets to play—plenty to drink and nothing to do. What a thing to be a gemman!" The boy who took the drag off at Ditchy, and the boy who swung the gate open on to the ground, each received a taste of the wished-for gentility in the shape of sixpence, thrown so freely, that no doubt he thought it had been raining sixpences all the way we came.

And now, as we had turned the last corner, even as Xenophon's jaded army, sick at heart and sore of foot, shouted with one voice, "The sea! the sea!" just so did we call out, "The tents! the tents!—the cricket-ground!"

And soon all the old jokes from old acquaintance clustering round our drag greeted us in the way of salutation.

"What, Johnny! You again! Positively his Lordship still!"—Now Johnny's *sobriquet* was "Lord Palmerston," because he had formed part of every (cricketing) administration in the memory of man. Some said our friend had played every match that ever was played for the last twenty years, and "John Marshall's Eleven" was as well understood and as well recognised a term as even Weippert's Band of years gone by.

And soon as we alighted from our dashing equipage every one met every one he had known before: and even I, after eighteen years, identified several elderly men whom I remembered once as

fine active players, but now had sunk into scorers, umpires, secretaries, or "eating members" of the Queenley Club. Every one was happy to see John—especially the ladies; for the match was quite a private fête for the amusement of Sir Arthur Queenley's family and friends around. And, added to the fact that John was known to every one in that part of the country, all of the young ladies seemed to regard John and his Eleven as quite a British institution: for, they had seen them every summer, as regularly as haymaking or sheep-shearing, ever since they were born.

Among other players, I was surprised by meeting a parishioner in young Elmore, who told our Longstop that he "never thought by his look that the Parson was up to a game of cricket;" and his reverence for me rose many degrees—indeed we quite fraternised—from that very hour.

Of course we soon were huddled together, carpet-bags and all, in a tent; and that queer morning costume was quickly laid aside, and we emerged in white flannels, with pink belts and blue caps—for, Johnny stipulated with the party he took to Queenley to turn out in their very best, and, as he said, "to bring their Sunday manners out week-days," as playing under the eyes of some very elegant young ladies, who always honoured us with their presence.

"We must play our very best to-day," said Johnny, ducking under the canvas, for he had just been on a little tour of discovery. "Lots of carriages are forming round the ground, and they have brought down Hocker, the Cambridge bowler, and two other first-rates, on purpose to victimise me. The fun is to make a regular example of my team this time; old Gardner has let me into that secret."

"Hocker is a slow bowler, is he not?" I asked.

"Yes," was the reply; "and our men cannot endure 'slows:' it is quite new to them, and takes them in cruelly."

"And very old and easy, and quite A B C work, I used to think it in my old-fashioned days," I whispered in his ear. "So, with practice or no practice, this may be the right day for me."

This Mr. Hocker they called the "artful dodger;" and our best bats "against the dodger" were said not to be worth four a-piece—Very discouraging, certainly!

Before the game began, Johnny came to me for a little consultation, as with rather an old hand, and said, among other things, "Their other bowlers are plain, and by no means fast, and the

ground is true, and not too lively; I should say, nothing could suit your state of practice better."

Well, this was all very well talking, but the Queenley side went in first, and scored seventy-nine; and then four of our men toppled over like nine-pins for thirty runs, when Johnny and I made a stand, adding fifteen: but luck was against us; I was caught, and he was run out, and we ended first innings short of their score by twenty-two!

This innings ended the first day's play, and seemed very ominous of what the next would be. There was an entertainment, in the way of an Evening-at-home—which was the reason we stopped so early, though the hours did not go quite so fast as my pen. No, we had all the usual quiet lounge on the grass and confab. of the cricket-field. While wickets were falling we had all the running criticism on the play, and recognition of old familiar faces; for, the very ghosts of the old Queenley men, I think, would haunt that cricket-ground, where so many happy hours had passed. Indeed I am rarely disappointed in my calculation that a certain set of my friends will all be drawn within the magic influence of their county cricket-match.

Fishing has been called "the contemplative man's recreation."—Well, the scenes in the Hampton punts—were it not for concomitant pipes and porter—might suggest that idea, but not so as you watch the excited countenance—every nerve on the alert—of a happy fellow, while the trout are rolling over and splashing amidst the ripples of a rapid crystal stream.

Following the mazy windings of a trout-stream and basking amidst the enjoyments of a cricket-ground are sports with one point in common. There is the *Pratorum viva voluptas*, as Lucretius says. That is, all nature seems instinct with life and joyousness, the valleys laugh and sing, and the heart and sympathies of man thrill and throb in harmony, especially in those sunny hours—who has not known them, on a glowing summer's day?—when, between the green sward beneath and the blue sky above, you hear the hum of happy myriads enjoying their brief span too.

As with angling, so with cricket; there is a pleasure even while doing nothing. While our side is "in," and we are watching the score with a running commentary on every ball, or lying on the grass, with a little quiet talk with men of kindred souls, really I know no moments when man is so truly conscious of utter abstraction from every earthly care.

The genius of Worry is a cruel tyrant: he throws his bitters

into man's choicest wine; he takes the relish from his daintiest dish, and draws on the woes of the morrow to dash even the joys of the day. Horace describes the genius of Worry — for so I make bold to interpret — as a crabbed wife sticking behind her husband on a pillion, ride as fast as he may. But there is one place where I can always leave Worry behind: namely, on entering a cricket-ground. Why, at Lord's, I have seen five thousand men standing in triple ring all round the field, so intent on the crafty attack of a Lillywhite and the stubborn defence of a Pilch, that you might swear an *alibi* of all gnawing care for every mother's son of them for hours together. Aye, and I could name a man of sad celebrity some five-and-thirty years ago, who, living in constant sleepless terror of the law's vengeance, which at last consigned him to the gallows, used, on returning from his guilty banking-house, to mix with that excited throng, striving to divert his agonising thoughts; and — when the game was over, I could tell how he would take home with him the happiest and most buoyant of those joyous spirits, and snatch in his company some moments of that repose which his crimes had banished from his nightly pillow!

But vain are such attempts to roll the guilty burthen from the heart? Back it comes, thundering like the stone of Sisyphus. It wants something more searching to minister to the mind when diseased by sinful courses. No. It is of the innocent we speak — of those whose lot is labour, with aching heart and throbbing brain, perhaps from honest anxiety for those who depend on them for nurture and support. And, there is no knowing how many careworn family-men of the country round enjoyed — before the last wicket fell on those two merry days — some hours of heart's ease as they sat in their gigs, or sought the shade of the poplars, all the live-long day, in Queenley Park.

But, to continue. The Queenley party — such was all that evening's talk — thought that victory must now be certain. "They cannot stand before Hocker," was the boast; and seeing how often Johnny had borne away the Queenley laurels, there was no little glee at the thought that, this time at least, the No-Buffooneries would be for once undone. All the ladies in the carriages joined in the triumph; while some made kind inquiries, and hoped Mr. John Marshall was not the worse for his spasmodic efforts and most meritorious exertions, deserving of a better fate.

All this Johnny took with his accustomed good humour. Still, both he and I agreed, as we walked away to dress for the evening's entertainment — for we were all "put up;" that is, "taken

in and done for," and that most kindly and hospitably too — that the game was on the cards, and something, which we whispered together, might yet be done to win.

"Only knock Hocker off," said he, "and the rest of their eleven is not match for us."

However, the evening amusements were in store, and as every No-Buffoonery man was always billeted on some Queenley man, Johnny and I and young Charlie went home with Sir Arthur, and enjoyed a pleasant walk, while shown by the ladies all the beautiful views for which Queenley Park is so renowned.

We spent a most delightful evening. There were three generations around the tea-table — a regular cricketers' meal, consisting of tea and coffee, ducks and peas, fowl and lobster-salad, fruit and cakes, with wine and Bass and cold beef on the sideboard — from the grandmamma of fourscore years, who asked for her old friend Mr. Marshall, to the young boy of eight, a nice little fellow, who showed me round the garden, with the Queenley church and monuments adjoining; then led me to the pond, and then across the lawn for archery and cricket, all of which the child summed up in the manner following:—

"This is where we shoot; this is where we practise cricket; and this is where we bathe; and this is where we are buried."

Next morning, Johnny and I, as we met on the grassplot before breakfast, agreed something must be done. He could play "the slows" of Hocker, and so could I — the very thing I used to play so easily at Oxford — and young Charlie, and two others I named to Marshall, were likely boys to learn the art, with a hint or two from me. So we determined on a little tuition, the chief part of which, of course, was, not to leave your ground, and to play rather on the defensive. Charlie's cousin, Edmund, was the most vexatious sticker we ever saw; so we impressed on Edmund that he must play his old game — not one whit ashamed, however slow and tame he felt — till Hocker was out of all patience, and found he might as well bowl against a barn-door.

Eleven men are never mustered very early the second day, so we had full time to teach our friends a little, and to make them awkward customers for slow bowling; for, the truth was, Hocker's bowling was the old game of my day revived, and only difficult because our men had not been used to play it. And now the game began in earnest, and soon the same carriages, and some more too — from the spreading of the news of victory, and Master Johnny being this time undone — had formed along one side of the ground by the time the Queenley men had ended their second

innings, and left us a hundred runs to make before we could win the game.

"And first, Johnny," I said, "you must lead off with two of our pupils, and I will follow with the other two; and, perhaps, by that time the 'artful dodger' may be knocked off."

However, we started with bad luck—one wicket fell first ball! This was, indeed, discouraging. Loud cheers followed from the Queenley party, and the No-Buffooneries seemed very dumb.

"Now, then," I said, "go in, Master Edmund, and block away till your bat is rotten, while Marshall makes the runs."

Young Edmund took me at my word, and did block and block away most vexatiously. The telegraph with large tin letters, visible all over the ground, after twenty minutes, marked **10**. Slow, but sure. Then Johnny hit a five. Oh! how the No-Buffooneries did shout! and by next over, the tin letters changed to **20**.

Young Edmund now grew bolder, and kept poking rather than hitting, ones and twos, which Hocker vowed was not like cricket.

"None the worse for that," said Johnny; "we can't afford to be particular."

The same slow and sure game was played, to Hocker's great disgust, till Marshall was stumped for **42** runs in all. It was then my turn; one hour passed away, and the score had run up to **78**, when my partner, Edmund, was caught out.

"We have **3** wickets only down for **78** runs," cried Marshall. —"That looks well: any odds and no takers; or, Lombard Street to a China orange!"

But, unhappily, it was soon to appear that John cried out too soon. For the next four wickets fell for two runs! Such are the ups and downs of cricket.

"There are **7** wickets down for **80** runs," cried the Queenleys. "What does Mr. Marshall say now?"

Positively this was awful! It really seemed as if our side had caught the falling sickness. And now Johnny could not keep quiet—one minute he sat down: then he got up and cut at the daisies; and though "chaffed" on all sides, not one word did he hear. At last he started off and ran across the ground to me, and said,—

"My good fellow, the tail of our eleven are not worth a run a-piece at Hocker's end. So, all depends on you. Go in and swipe. If you only hit over the brow of the hill, as far as the

flag-staff, the ball will run of itself till it gets to the ditch. Don't be afraid to hit—your eye must be in by this time—and mind you run even numbers, and keep the ball when Hocker bowls."

True enough my eye was good indeed by that time. And at the first ball—as Hocker was quite off his guard from my previously steady play—I walked in and hit him over the brow of the hill for five runs. The ball rolled down among the rustics lying in the shade, just out of the ditch—one hobnailed son of the soil directly picked it up, "to oblige the gentleman." "Down with it!" shouted Marshall, so loud that Chawbacon dropped the ball as if it were hot. Cheers rent the air—five were scored, and once more I had the ball at the other wicket. This Over added five more, and left me again opposed to Hocker.

"Call the score," said Hocker.

"It is 10 to win, and 3 wickets to make them," cried old Gardner, poking Johnny most sympathetically in the ribs.

The game now looked well again, and Johnny was already edging up to the carriages to turn the laugh upon his lady friends, and to talk of such odds as a lady's long kids to a gentleman's shorts, when suddenly the tide was doomed to turn. My next hit was stopped for one run, and this placed my partner within reach of Hocker.

This was all that Hocker wished.

"Only give me a chance at any but that old stager," said he, "that's all;" and, true to his word, he bowled one man out the second ball. The next Over levelled the ninth wicket!

Great was the excitement.

"Here is the last man going in!" cried the Queenleys.

"It is any odds and no takers on our side now, I think," said Sir Arthur.

"It is 9 to win, and the last wicket," cried young Tom Queenley from the telegraph: "'Lombard Street to a China orange'—so say we, Mr. Marshall."

"Mr. Austin, now do step in and hit," cried young Charlie.

"Silence! silence!" said Johnny. "Be true to your motto, gentlemen: above all things remember"—and here he waved his own silk flag—"that

"THIS IS NO TIME FOR BUFFOONERY."

All this gave me time to pause and to collect myself; and so—in consideration of the excited company and my own want of wind—I suggested to Mr. Hocker that he might perhaps "like

to stop and take a glass of something, and then set to work in proper style at this nervous point of the game."

The enemy took the bait—nothing could be better. I was rather out of breath at the time I spoke, and parched with thirst, not being in cricketing condition, and I only wanted a little powder for the crowning effort. I was also disposed to continue the excitement of some five hundred lookers-on.

Out came Johnny with some wine and water, and patted me on the back, and said, "There's life in the old dog yet!"

The excitement all round the ground was now extreme: all knew the score, and all were breathless as we once more took our stand at the wickets.

"Call the game," cried Sir Arthur.

"It is 9 to win," said the scorers, "and the last wicket!"

"Yes; and the old one has the ball," said Johnny, with a shake of the head.

This 9 was reduced to 7 by one hit; and I now was opposed to Hocker, and, what was better still, I had now to begin a new Over.

And now Hocker bowls—I step in and make two.

"Now it is 5 to win!" is the cry.

But now the men are placed so far out in all points but one, to which I turned a longing eye—square to the leg—that no hard hit, it seemed, would tell. However, next ball I made a feint—just one step out and then as quickly back again. Hocker fell into the snare, and dropping the ball short as a dodge, to deceive me, he gave the easiest possible long-hop for a hit—so easy, I had time to step across the wicket—time to open my shoulders—and time to think where I should like to place it. Square leg was the open point—and, hitting as I never hit before, I sent the ball soaring high in air right over the carriages!

Cries of "Well hit!" "Run it out!" "Run like mad!" "Put your best leg first!" resounded all round the field, while we ran a perfect race between the wickets, till the fifth round was made, and the blue caps of the No-Buffooneries are waved and tossed into the air in happy triumph.

I have seen many exciting matches, but few where the excitement was so general or so long sustained.

Every cricket-player has had his happy day never to be forgotten. The game is one of chance as well as skill—that *your* day should be one on which you most desire to help your side out of a difficulty is almost too much to hope; yet the best innings I ever had in my life was in this wise:—

"The Wykehamists against the University" was an annual match, and the Wykehamists knew me as an awkward (left-handed) customer of old. Accordingly, my last year at Oxford, the match was fixed for the day before my "Great Go," it being supposed that every man wants to read up to the last moment before that awful day. But, to the surprise of all, I appeared upon the ground — went in first and remained to the last — "eighty-five, and not out," being recorded in the score-book. It happened on that occasion, too, that there was one bowler whom no one of my side could play, and it was computed that I made, in effect at least, two-thirds of the whole score. No ordinary score on my part could have saved the game.

Cricket is no selfish game — half the pleasure is in sympathy, in the joy we share and the joy we give — I was not playing for myself but for my party, and hundreds were happy in my success.

"Mr. Austin ought to have played on our side," said young Elmore, "and had I only known he could play, you should not have had an Elkerton man to play against us. I'll manage better another time."

This youth was soon among the number of those who congratulated me on my performance; and I was not long in giving him a hint to form a club for, not only the gentlemen, but the villagers of Elkerton. I said it would form a strong diversion from the ale-house; and when once a rustic's breast is fired with love of honour — though the occasion be only one of bats and balls — the same principle may actuate him even in more serious matters.

The drag and four greys made their appearance after about an hour. It took an hour to talk over the game; and then, with three cheers from all the company, the No-Buffoonery Eleven drove happily away.

I remained with my friend Marshall a fortnight, playing two other matches, as also seeing one with the Zingari, who made a "cricket week" at the Duke of ——. But how, on those scorching days, our thirst was slaked with a certain "Cup," which consumed above a butt of claret mixed with ice and soda-water, refreshment-tents being open to all the country round; and how, at daybreak, his Grace's noble stud bore each a cricketer to see cub-hunting; and how, with a party every evening and many guests, the ancestral mansion had not a room from floor to gable-ends without its tenant,—all this were long to tell.

Suffice it to say, that though at the time I had ever and anon

a qualm — to which conscience had to plead medical advice — about waste of time or dissipation; yet, since, I have felt it was only a dissipation of all mental fogs and mists that so long had hung over the unaired nooks and corners of my mind: and, the immediate proof was this:—

I returned — *vera loquor* — on a Friday, feeling as if all looked bright that once looked blue. I was busy enough all the Saturday, and on the Sunday my curate was informed that he might ride over to Manton and help my good friend James. No second sermon — no one ready to read on if I broke down — no one present even to give me confidence, was at all wanted now: for a new vital current had given tone to my nerves — recreation — diversion, properly so called — had mercifully done their providential work, and Henry Austin was himself again.

CHAPTER XIII.

THINGS PAROCHIAL AND THINGS DOMESTIC—PREACHING: AND HOW NOT TO DO IT—AND HOW A LADY IN LOVE WILL NOT LISTEN TO ADVICE.

I NOW began to feel quite at home—quite confident in my powers restored, so much so that I was full of my plans for making Elkerton a model parish. I should rather say, making myself a model pastor; for it takes more than one generation to make much visible progress in an agricultural parish. But it is surprising how small a thing makes a hindrance, and how little grit will disturb your best machinery. So, the rules of Elkerton Parsonage were at first of a very brittle description.

For, my study was near the hall-door. Ellen passed it every time she left her room, and had almost always something to say; and all the servants brought messages, or asked questions, just from the very ease with which it could be done. Add to this, every one comes to a Rectory about every thing: it is literally a house-of-call and a general-advice or agency-office. With us, it was one servant's business to open the door; till at last I was obliged to appoint a regular hour for all parish calls of no great emergency, and also to write "No Admittance" on my study door. But even that only partially ensured a quiet morning: for, every man's business seemed important from without: while, within doors, children will cut their fingers, or break their little knees; or the wife may in other ways be thrown into a state of excitement too much for one, and then she is sure to rush into the study to vent some upon her husband, and so talk it all off her mind.

I remember the case of a lawyer, whose clerk said that, till he took an office away from his wife and family, his business was never half attended to. Now, at many a Rectory you may hear the children cry, the dinner ordered, or the maids discharged, as

well as every message at the hall door. And since every one expects the Parson to be a tender father, a loving husband, and a most domesticated creature generally, who is so likely to be disturbed by these sublunary cares?

However, with a strong will and hearty resolution, habit reconciles all things; and Horace truly says that *res mihi*—to make circumstances fit me—is a very wild-goose chase; but *me rebus*—to make me fit them—is true philosophy. Therefore, I took courage from considering what great works had been achieved in spite of interruptions. Richard Hooker was seen by his friend rocking the cradle while meditating his "Ecclesiastical Polity," and Mrs. Hooker was like a blister behind his ears all the time.

But early rising is the best means of all of avoiding interruption from within and periodical visiting from without; when the people find you come to them periodically, they can hardly quarrel with you for refusing attention at the Rectory to smaller matters.

As to this periodical visiting—having, as I said, divided my parish into four circuits—I resolved to take each on stated days, and between stated hours. In this I found great advantage; the punctuality of my course looked serious and in earnest. This I learned from that good man Williams. He was one of the most methodical of men; with him every hour had its work, and he was hardly to be made to deviate. Maintaining that "character is power," he said there was a great momentum in punctuality; and he used to relate, with much glee, that at one time so regularly did he leave his house at the same hour, that one old woman set her clock by him.

Besides, whether called on to visit or not—and those who want good counsel most are the last to ask it—I was thus in a fair way of seeing all my people once a-week, at all events.

Then, the sight of the Parson going from cottage to cottage acts, like the church bell or the Sunday procession, as a standing reproof to the thoughtless, as well as a standing memento to all.

There is a good story told of a Parson and a Painter.

The Parson (the Rev. H. M.), every morning, at six o'clock, was sitting over his Bible and his sermon at his window.

The Painter, with his cans and brushes, began his work at the same hour.

The Parson's pen and the Painter's brush had moved on together. The Parson stopped for breakfast at eight, and the Painter did the same; but coming back at nine, there was the Parson working too.

"Parson's work isn't piece-work," said the Painter. "He wouldn't do all this for nothing. Some Master's eye must be over him; at all events he thinks so, and with all this learning, he must be a better judge than I."

The result was, that, for the first time in his life, the painter attended unto the things that belonged unto his peace.

Ever since I first told Ellen this story, "Remember the poor painter" has been a by-word at the Rectory, and a stirring admonition to avoid all desultory ways of doing things. Dropping water wears a stone; and of all the blessings of a fixed and territorial ministry, there is none more sure to worm and wear its way than that offer and heralding of pardon and of peace which the pastor's walk of a duty seems daily to renew at every cottage door.

And many a sermon have I made as I walked along; this plan is matchless. Start with some text or topic fit for week-day talk, and it will be most fit for Sunday too, and ventilate your ideas with the smith under his shed, with the labourer in the field, or the aged granny in the chimney-corner. On a fine summer day —your walk being known and visit expected—you will find a little congregation from time to time—as I have found under the ash-tree in Collins's Lane, at the Quarry at dinner-time, and once to some sheepshearers under a hedge. Of course this wants a bold, a homely, and a cheerful common-sense strain. When men and women are not penned up in a pew, you must say something worth hearing, or they will soon move on, or show by their looks they have had enough for once.

As to dry divinity, however sound—quoting the Church, and saying *she*—talking not of men and women but of abstract qualities—you might as well talk Arabic to men out of church; and, I suspect, in church too.

The Prophet of old was a living, breathing man; one with his message. This is the secret of all persuasiveness—that eye shall meet eye, soul blend with soul, and the mouth speak the overflowing heart. This is the only style men will endure on week-days, whatever my brethren may think of Sundays. But the prophet of these days deals in naked, cold, and shivering abstractions—speaks in the third person, like Cæsar's *Commentaries*—treads the mill-horse round of orthodoxy, and little dreams that the Word was put into the mouths of men and women in Holy Writ to suit the sense and sympathies of men and women now. So he virtually takes it out again, and—stripping the Word of all force, and fire, and flesh and blood—and turning himself into an

automaton, he languidly lets fall crude and indigestible pellets, in the shape of theological dogmas, with nine parts about what men should *think*, to one part about what men should *do*.

This is especially the kind of preaching which prevails in London and large towns. Truths the most tremendous are—not proclaimed, but—submitted and suggested in the most mild and optional form. There is a falsetto tone and manner, and a kind of West-end taste and good-breeding, that govern every sentence. Instead of the preacher telling the congregation what they should do, the congregation virtually tell their minister what he shall preach. This, however appalling, is no exaggeration; it is downright fact. Preachers have said to me many a time, "But our people won't like this."—Parishioners have said to me many a time, "But we should not like that." And, with all fair allowance for the temper of the audience to be addressed, I maintain, there is too often a servile compromise of truth, and an unmanly conventionalism which lowers the tone, minces the manner, and acts on a tacit understanding, as to the most palatable topics.

And here I am not advocating anything like vulgar Rant, but the honest words of truth and soberness. Instead of which, we too often see a figure in a Sunday pulpit looking about as passionless as at Madame Tussaud's, and treating of life, and death, and judgment to come, with far less feeling or energy than the man who delivers the diving-bell lecture at the Polytechnic.

This is the more to be regretted, because this does not always proceed from any want of feeling, but only from a kind of frostwork of pulpit etiquette: neither have we often to complain of want of talent in the preacher. We rarely hear a sermon so bad but it evinces quite as much ability as, properly applied, would make a better.

My standard is not by any means an ideal one. I could name two preachers in Tyburnia, at the present time, who are worthy exceptions to this rule of drowsy conventionalism—effective preachers both: and that, not by virtue of their talents, but simply because they are not only in earnest, but seem in earnest. Every Sunday, each pours forth his heart and soul in words. Full of Scripture, they speak what they think and what they feel—each as unlike the other as Isaiah is unlike Ezekiel.

"But," says a friend, "these are elderly men, and men of talent."

No matter. Then I will point to the Rev. ——, a young man—a man of only average talent—in the same neighbourhood. He also is effective: because, he never merged himself—his own

free will and judgment—as others do, in any common clerical fund, and never came forth another man, "a sham man," to grind away like a mere cog in some soul-less church-machinery to the end of his days.

Nine out of ten of the London preachers warp themselves after one and the same unnatural model. It little matters who is the preacher, or what the text. Liberty of private judgment results, strangely enough, in the same tone and the same topics, and these the very last topics which any man, reading the Gospel for himself, would ever think of choosing. Hundreds move in the same groove, and the same narrow gauge. They run their sentences through the same mould, their style being the very model of what a style ought not to be; namely, just that stilted, stereotyped style, which—as I know from some little sifting—realises the idea formed by an average congregation of fine writing.

It has been said, and with some truth, that the higher the dignitary the worse the sermon. We could name some great exceptions, but I am sorry to say that pulpit conventionalism, of the most repulsive and freezing kind, is too often found among those to whom the younger clergy should look for an example.

Popular language shows popular thought. So, we hear that such an Archdeacon is "a safe man," "sound," "orthodox," and "not a man to commit himself." So far well. Let it be granted that he will do no harm; but we want a man to do some good: we want a man who is earnest, and who will speak from the fulness of his own heart, however little the tone of his Dean and Chapter—such a man would give a character of usefulness to an Archdeacon's Visitation. Neither is there anything in which Archdeacons could be more useful, if chosen accordingly, than in upholding a good standard of plain, natural, and forcible preaching. And it were devoutly to be wished that—just as the Duke of Wellington would give no chaplaincy to a man whose reading could not be heard—no higher office should be given to a man whose preaching could not be listened to. Then, we should have no more to blush for men whom the laity, as plain men of business, ridicule as "great guns," and "too fine by half;" but we might, perchance, after a Visitation, find them "pricked to the heart," and saying, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

Almost all men think by proxy. They sink their own thoughts in the common fund; and, as Sharpe said, in his quaint way,—"They have their thinking, like their washing, 'done out.'" When, therefore, a young man finds a certain regulation style,

and tone, and cadence, all bearing the stamp of authority, he is almost sure to slide into it; and it requires no little courage afterwards to rebel against the stiff collar and shell-jacket clerical, and assert the rights and liberties of all his faculties, and the free use of all his limbs.

And now Ellen had returned from Bowdon. I told her with much pleasure the relief I felt in being restored to full power and energy — though care was still wanted, as it proved, to complete my renovation — and was disappointed at her not responding as I expected.

But trouble follows trouble, like wave upon wave in the ocean of life, and the declining state of a father's health deprived Ellen of all the pleasure she once promised herself if she could but see her husband quite himself again.

Fanny and Miss Keys soon took their leave: Fanny went first. When she was gone, we found Fanny had proposed that they should join establishments; but poor Miss Keys was almost talked to death at the time Fanny proposed it — and now the old lady remained a few days purely to recover herself.

Edward Elmore now paid me a visit to propose a cricket-club, and asked me to join.

I replied, that if he would make a club in which young farmers and labourers could play too, I should be most happy: indeed, great benefit would result to my parish, as well as healthful exercise for myself; and I offered a field for the purpose, with some advice as to preparing the ground. Robert Horton, he said, would join, as also Captain Bulkeley's son, and George Scott, Lady Newcome's nephew, It at once glanced across my mind that Low Church would look a little more friendly at High, and even political asperities be smoothed away, by the fire of enthusiasm which a country cricket-match had been known to cause.

It was about this time that, as the world never stands still, whether inside a parsonage or without, that Ellen's nursery seemed destined to undergo a change of dynasty, in consequence of the tender passion taking possession of Martha Bromley.

In olden time, the servants of the Hall were the natives of the parish. We had Giles Hodson's daughter from the shop, or John Balls' big boy from the mill. We knew something of their birth, parentage, and education — not that it was very often much worth knowing — and we knew where they came from when we took them, and where they went after they left us. In this state

of things, the master was likely to take an interest in the servant, and the servant was likely to feel some tie to the master. But, on the other hand, this kind of feudal system clearly denotes in the servant very little mind or enterprise, and no free market for his labour, and, therefore, very little scope for his advancement.

I cannot, therefore, venture to give more than a qualified assent to those who sigh for the "good old servants"—"quite the friends of the family," and "sharing in its fortunes," of whom we hear in days gone by. I believe that those servants were far more ignorant—far more gross in their habits, and more of the animal, and I am not sorry that railroads, causing a greater mental activity and a wider sphere of action, have broken up this narrow system; for, though the cause of morality may have lost something in one way, I suspect that it has gained far more in another. Nearly the only remnant of this state of vassalage is now found about the parsonage-houses of England, and Martha Bromley at Elkerton was a very fair instance of it.

I have said that Martha's pulse of love was in a very intermitting state. Ellen almost quarrelled with her about taking the children, however bleak or damp the weather, always over the Common to Jacques' farm; and now, Martha's restlessness and indifference to her work had reached such a height, that the dreaded change in our nursery seemed the less evil of the two.

While such were our musings, Martha, one morning, while fastening her mistress's dress behind, mustered courage to begin about "changing her condition," and alluded to "a most flattering offer from Mr. Jacques of the Farm."

"He has had two wives already," said Ellen; "has he not?"

"La! ma'am: what made you think of that?—I suppose he may have had," said Martha.

"Do you know what both these wives died of?" Ellen asked, not sorry to be able to stop by a little laughter the sentimental strain in which her maid had begun.

As this question drew no particular reply, Ellen reminded her of Blue Beard's cupboard, and then said that the step she was going to take was a very serious one, seeing that she was "a lady with a handsome fortune," and ended by advising her to speak with me after breakfast.

Accordingly, Martha, having found me in my study, was beginning to explain how she had an attachment of one kind for her master and mistress and the Rectory, where she had lived so long, but an attachment of another kind to Farmer Jacques. But this

prelude, I thought, was wholly unnecessary; for it was always my opinion, that to reason with a lady when she talks of being married, is like reasoning in a fever with a patient who is light-headed. And as to what they call love, it is as the froth and effervescence that prevent you truly judging of the champagne —or, nature's *ignis fatuus*, to beguile young people into some destined position; but whether, when this fancy and romance have vanished before the glaring daylight of fact and reality —and whether, when no longer "charms strike the sense," we shall find that "merit which wins the soul"—this is a question, indeed.

However, I treated Mrs. Bromley's as a mere money-matter, and soon pointed out that her hundred and odd pounds in the savings' bank would become Farmer Jacques' property as soon as she came out of church as his lawful wife. I also explained a mode of settling and securing this money in case of his death, or "other accident"—by which I meant insolvency, being at the time well aware that Farmer Jacques had been obliged to make some violent effort by a sacrifice of stock to be in time for the last audit.

It soon appeared that some neighbour had suggested this settlement before: "but Farmer Jacques," she said, "did go on so about his honour as a man, and a trumpery bit of money not worth talking about," when she was to be raised to the dignity of "a farmer's wife," and "receive his company like any lady"—that Martha was afraid the eligible offer might be withdrawn, and the smiles of all the Jacques' family turn to sneers and contempt.

But Martha boasted to Ellen that she was to have what was quite as good as any settlement; for it was promised that the butter, pigs, and poultry should be sold by her, and the proceeds reserved to provide her own personal expenses, including clothes, tea, and sugar, and small groceries for the house.

The reason that people who ask advice are so rarely disposed to take it is, that they rarely ask till they are deeply interested in one side of the question, and then it is too late to suggest the other. So, I soon gave up urging the settlement, for I saw none would ever be made; but Ellen and Mrs. Seymour were most persevering in the endeavour to prevent that "sly old Blue Beard" from robbing poor Martha of her honest earnings after some thirty years of faithful service.

But all was in vain. "Mrs. Austin has an interest," said a friend of Mr. Jacques; "she wants to break off the match on the

score of money, and keep you to mind those squalling brats and drudge for her. That's what she's up to."

The last warning Ellen spoke was this:—"Now, Martha, remember that I have warned you. The time may come when you are without a penny and without a home; but if so, do not come to our door—do not, from the time you leave, imagine that you have any more claim on the Rectory-house."

After this emphatic warning, there was much formality and distance between master and mistress on the one part, and the maid on the other, for three or four days; for no woman ever can be cordial with people who depreciate her intended. But after a while—as all the preparations went on, and parcels and notes dropped in, and more than once the dressmaker came to fit on wedding clothes—we thought it better to accept the affair as settled in a sympathetic way; so we said we would hope for the best, and then we made her a present to show our interest in her future fortunes. A few weeks had soon passed away, and my attendance was requested on a morning named to marry them: she was to be married from the Rectory, and Mr. Williams would give the bride away.

This giving away is a difficulty sometimes. I have known a clerk act as father of the bride to many young women, and stand godfather to a large number of children, in a large parish; or the one never would have been married nor the other baptized at all: but the most ill-omened affair I ever remember was this:—

A couple once came to me to be married, without any friend to help them. But as they crossed the churchyard they espied the crown of a hat, a pair of hands, and a pickaxe, sometimes above ground and sometimes below. When they came to the altar, the clerk's wife only was in attendance, and she said, "You can't be married; for it wants a man to give you away, and you have not brought one." Then said the bridegroom, "Step out and tell that man I saw in the churchyard to come up out of the grave for five minutes, and I'll give him a pint of beer for his trouble."

This couple had no kind of superstition about them, and the grave-digger would actually have given the bride away, had I not suggested an alternative.

Martha, in one point, was no less matter-of-fact. She rose early on her wedding morning, performed all the nursery ablutions as usual, and dressed the children and then herself, by which time Farmer Jacques' covered spring-cart was at the door, into which she took the children—to be, with Ellen and Mrs. Seymour,

the witnesses of the marriage of "Martha Bromley, of the Rectory, spinster, to Thomas Jacques, of Greenaway Farm, widower, both of the parish of Elkerton."

All went well for a month. Rarely, indeed, do the first letters from a happy couple reflect the gloom of any evil forebodings. Visits of congratulation were paid: her home, and all its comforts and riches—from the silver teapot, "so long in the family," to the old carved oak bedstead—were duly displayed; and her fowls and ducks in the way of live-stock—or "her settlement," as she called it, with a strong emphasis—were made the most of, too, as she pointed them out quacking and crowing about the yard. Neither did she forget to solicit our custom to buy the same at the usual market price.

I was well aware that the said marriage settlement would fetch the highest price, if any one as sympathetic as Ellen helped to turn it into cash. But it is worth something to see smiles instead of sulks all over your parish, and the Jacques family were quite a colony beyond the common, so a formidable party for the Parson to offend; though a layman would not care however sour they might have looked: so I agreed to assist our old friend all I could.

For some months Mrs. Jacques' was a most pleasant resting-place, and the children were always eager "to go and see Martha," and were as regularly regaled with curds and whey, or some such simple hospitality; and all was so pleasant and prosperous, that Martha looked quite triumphant: and, as she rode down to church in "her coburg," one of the farm-labourers in his Sunday's best was ready to put the horse in and out of the Rectory stable, and Martha had also the distinction of a talk with the Rector's family after church, she became really worth a bow or a courtesy from no small part of the congregation.

CHAPTER XIV.

HOW I TRY TO SAIL ON A SIDE-WIND—THE ELKERTON CRICKET-CLUB AND CERTAIN OTHER KINDS OF OPPOSITION TO THE PUBLIC-HOUSE.

In the course of this summer Edward Elmore had formed his cricket-club—my club, in reality—but I preferred to remain in the back-ground. Much depends on the way you do things. My friend Matt. Currant, who was rather of the Heavy-sternius build, could not play cricket in his parish, because all the assembled rustics cried out, "Go it, Parson!" with loud jeers and laughter, every time he waddled between the stumps. All I cared to do was to teach them how to play, enjoying no little pleasure myself while also bent on the amusement of others.

The last address that the late Judge Talfourd uttered impressed the great truth, that sympathy should be fostered between rich and poor. And Baron Alderson also once spoke with much pleasure of country gentlemen joining their own tenants and labourers in the cricket-field. In this respect our rifle-clubs also will rank high among the most valuable of British institutions. For, a fondness for the same thing is the bond of friendship; as Sallust said.

My cricket-club was designed to encourage sympathy between man and man, however wide their ranks might be asunder, and most admirably did it conduce to this end.

The first thing was to lay down certain rules of conduct. Accordingly, I took no part in the club till I received a requisition to do so. This placed me in a position to explain, that if I could appear always in my proper character, and they would agree that all bad words and oaths—unhappily, almost the idiom of the parish—should involve a forfeit or absence from the cricket-field, I should be most happy to share their happiness, and do all in my power to promote their amusement.

Will Harris, a young miller, was a very fine, active young man, and a general favourite in Elkerton; so I made him quite my lieutenant in command, and taught him how to bowl in the old fast underhand fashion. With a little encouragement he would bowl for an hour or more every evening, and as I started him in a certain mechanical swing, with measured steps and uniform delivery, I soon saw that he would make a very formidable opponent, and so it proved. Will's arm would at last work true as a windmill, his precision and straightness being almost like that of a catapult. Young Jacques, Ben Cave, and John Millwood, among others, quite caught the cricket mania; and the good result was, that instead of vying with each other only in smoking and drinking, and instead of lying about in bad company, these men were subjected to the improving influence of their Rector and the gentlemen of the neighbourhood.

By the end of the summer, eleven of Elkerton played eleven of Bowdon, the Parson part of the time being umpire, and part of the time the Doctor; and greater than ever was the honour of an innings, because Ellen and Mrs. Seymour assisted at the scoring-table.

Horton, Elmore, and Col. Kent joined me in providing a cold dinner; and though the game was lost by a few runs, still there was much encouragement in having been able to make so good a fight with an old club like Bowdon.

Will Harris, on this occasion, was greatly complimented, and received a new bat for his good play, and became from that time the admired of all the admirers for miles around.

All Elkerton was now fired with a spirit of emulation unfelt before in their rugged hearts, and I could not but reflect how much is lost to the cause of humanity by every unnecessary barrier which cuts off the labourer from all converse with his lord.

By the end of October all cricket was at an end, and the public-house was regaining its old customers, and idle habits threatened once more to prevail throughout the winter; and all this was the more to be regretted, because it was now clear that the rustics did badly only from want of encouragement to do well. So, once more I set my wits to work to create a diversion in another way, as I will now explain.

The principal public-house at Elkerton was called "the Stag," the property of Mr. Horton. If there was a brawl at the Stag, or any case of late hours, Joseph Bligh, our constable, besides the quiet glass he could have at the bar and not pay for, was well aware, that what would cost another house its license he could

safely compromise at the Stag. Licensing, I have observed, all over the country, is a duty as anomalous for the local magistrates, especially in towns, as trying the poachers of their own game. Well, the Stag inn had many customers, and sold the poor fellows beer so cruelly drugged, that I once observed to our Doctor that one glass made me heavy all the afternoon.

"It is drugged with *nux vomica*," said he. "It prostrates the working man's strength, and makes him mad; and if he goes home, as Edward Hancock did last week, having spent every penny, and beats his wife and child, the man is as much to be pitied as blamed."

"I am thinking, Doctor," I replied, "what we can do, and whether I cannot set up some kind of opposition. What do you think is the best remedy for this public-house nuisance?"

"Let us consider, first of all," said he, "what they frequent the public-house for, and see if we cannot supply the same demand in a purer way."

"Then you think it is not only for the beer that they go?"

"Certainly not, as regards a large majority. They go, first, for talk and company and mental excitement, for this is as necessary as food itself; and men who do not read, and whose digging and ploughing require no effort of the mind, can only find exercise for their wits at the public-house. Secondly, they go there for a warm, comfortable room to sit in, as also for a little company, finding at home neither fire, candle, nor repose."

"Oh! Doctor, Doctor!" said Ellen, "Lady Newcome and party will be soon after you, if you bring club life down to Elkerton, and draw the labourer, like the gentleman, away from his wife and family to spend his evenings out."

"We must be prepared for that argument, Mrs. Austin," said he; "but some of our people have no wives or families, and those who have, had better go home full of tea or coffee than maddened by poisonous liquors."

"But there is such a prejudice," objected Ellen, "among ladies about the London Clubs."

"But a most foolish prejudice this is," said the Doctor: "because, for one man who is tempted to leave his own family by the club, ten at least are kept by the club from billiard-rooms or taverns. My 'Poor Man's Club' is simply a diversion from an evil which now exists, and that with the worst consequences. My advice is to set open a room, with fire and candle, and cheap tea and coffee, and an old woman to provide it."

"Well, if this were arranged they could have some moral and instructive books," suggested Ellen.

"I would have some books which they would be likely to read," said Seymour; "but as to the moral or instructive part, poor men find such books as little to their taste as other people."

"Oh, fie, Mr. Seymour!"

"What I would maintain, Mrs. Austin, is, that every book and every newspaper fit for us to read, to the poor man tends to morality; because it draws forth his mental to counteract his animal nature, and keeps worse thoughts out of his mind. As to the class of books commonly recommended to induce the poor to read, they are utterly useless. Nothing is so generally available as a well-conducted newspaper, and now I think Mr. Austin's plan of lending assistance to our editor may reap its full reward."

"But what a prejudice there will be against this also!" said Ellen. "What, no religious books?"

"No, no, Ellen," I replied. "Libraries, if kept for the rich, have no religious books; and books not read stand in the predicament of no books at all. These poor creatures at present read nothing but a vulgar ballad, and have little to think of but is truly distressing to contemplate. Newspapers supply the purest matter that they can at present be induced to read. We must not spoil all by attempting too much."

"We must remember," said the Doctor, "that we are talking not of a school-room but of a club-room—we are not providing for their moral instruction, but only to divert their minds; and, the drunken waggoner who was crushed by the wheel last week—the ship that was wrecked, and all lives lost—or, the Bishop with his missionaries for 'foreign parts;'—these three subjects exemplify the varieties in our daily press, and as fast as a man's mind rises superior to the contents of one column he may read another."

"Improve a man's taste if you can, but don't starve him by endeavouring to cram him with what he cannot relish. Nothing in literature is so fresh, so natural, so life-like, as a newspaper—a local newspaper especially."

"Yes, Doctor," I said; "remember Farmer Milford's wife—how she told us that the *Manton Herald* was the only letterpress that her boys read all the week."

"Very true," said Ellen; "and how necessary that the daily press should be pure!—I see now, Harry, that your interest in the *Herald* may do much good indeed. But could you not have some lectures—some good advice for the poor men, to be given in their new club-room?"

"All that, Mrs. Austin, may come in course of time," said the Doctor. "Perhaps one evening I may bring down my magic lantern: but as to good advice, unless in an amusing form, poor men don't like being lectured or preached to much better than we do."

This conversation will show enough of the object of my Poor Man's Club. I was not without hope that, when once I could bring my parishioners to meet together in an innocent way, that other means for their improvement would occur in due course, and so it proved.

After words should come actions.

Behold the school-room full of temperance flags and mottoes, with garlands and evergreens, and eight tea-parties of about thirteen each, making one hundred guests in all. Ellen at one table, Mrs. Seymour at another, and other ladies or farmers' wives at the rest, with Edward Elmore, Will Harris, and others, making themselves generally useful. The company consisted of some few men, but chiefly women and children, to inaugurate my Poor Man's Club. Tom and Teddy, and Uncle Ben, were there to help cut up the huge loaves full of blown-out raisins, which the boys had the impudence to say looked like cockroaches; and when all had eaten till they could eat no more, Uncle Ben gave one or two prefatory hems, and then cried out, "The Parson's speech! the Parson's speech!" while some rattled the cups and saucers, or tables, and cried, "Hear, hear;" and Teddy, holding up the cake-knife in true tragic style, said,—

> "Is this a dagger that I see before me,
> The handle towards my hand ——?"

Silence being restored, I stood at one of the desks and made a speech, saying, "How happy we were to see the wives and families on our opening day, and hoped again to give them the benefit of the club-room from time to time; but the wives would benefit in another way — in the wages their husbands would now bring home, and also in avoiding scenes too painful to mention. Some wives might forget the existing temptations of the public-house, and might complain of my inciting their husbands to spend their evening away from home. I could only advise them to make home clean, and orderly, and comfortable, and I should be delighted to find that the club was superseded by the improvements of cottage life."

"And now," said the Doctor, "I think it is my turn. Give me ten minutes to arrange my apparatus, and then, ladies and

gentlemen, you will see what you will see. And, among other things, you will see — a patent rat-trap on a most original principle, never exhibited before in these parts."

And soon a white sheet was stretched upon a frame, and the magic lantern, with all its various shadows of ghosts and goblins, dwarfs and skeletons, was displayed, seeming like a miracle to those untutored minds: but at last Tom or Teddy cried out impatiently, "The rat-trap! the rat-trap!" When, suddenly on to the stage came a fine fat farmer, with top-boots and green coat; next he took a jump, and seemed to vanish in the ceiling. Next he appeared again, as if tired and sleepy, lying and snoring open-mouthed, upon his back, when in came a fine large rat with curly tail, and ran about all over the farmer's legs, then into his boots, and then into his pocket, and at last the rat reappeared and ran up his waistcoat, and sat upon his brawny breast. And then, espying the farmer's open mouth, at one bound in he went, and was down the farmer's throat in a second.

The roars of laughter that followed this unexpected form of patent rat-trap, and, indeed, the screams of delight from all the children, plainly told us that never would this happy evening be forgotten by the rustics of Elkerton.

The most ingenious machinery for changing the raw commodity of our outlying country villages into reasonable beings will surely fail, unless the social reformer pays personal attention to his own work. And "Mr. Austin's tea-and-coffee shop" — such was the depreciating impertinence of some people — was quite a little trade to look after in the morning, and was half-a-mile's walk one or two evenings in the week.

All kinds of little difficulties arose at first. Hannah Bone was my first lady-in-waiting; but she proved "to have a temper of her own," and a way of her own too; also, she was shaky, and had weak nerves, and some of the men were very rough and wanted to fill their own cups. The schoolmaster in Leicester goal, as I once saw, used to be locked in an iron cage, and had to put his pens and pencils to his obedient pupils through the bars. Hannah Bone wanted some protection of the same uncomplimentary kind. So, she soon had to make way for Mary Anne Hopkins; and I had to invent a kind of closet and bar for order's sake: for, by this time the cracks, and chips, and downright breakages in my crockery, were considerable.

Then, as another difficulty, everything that happened was misrepresented and exaggerated. When two men happened to quarrel one night, there were jokes about the tea being too strong

—it got to their heads: and the fact that there was not a summons before Mr. Horton, no very friendly judge—because the proprietor of the opposition public-house—was due far more to my exertions in ending the strife, than to any want of pains by others to foment it. However, scandal, like other subjects, has its day, and the "tea-and-coffee movement," and "our Rector's latest invention for making the tea-kettle beat the beer barrel," and all such jests and gibes, were soon worn threadbare, and the measure was fairly left to its own merits.

My plan was to go for half an hour and talk to the men, and, other topics failing, to read and explain an article in the *Herald*. Then, the school-room map was an endless source of entertainment. One day I gave them half-an-hour's lecture on a plum-pudding, tracing the currants, the raisins, the sugar, and the brandy, and the spice, to their different countries; and then pointed to the various ports, showing where the said sweets were landed, till all had paid duty, and were bought and retailed by Mary Fooks at the chandler's shop. Then, whenever I left the room, I set up Edward Tanner, or some one else who was a scholar, to read an entertaining story to the rest.

The Doctor often came and did the same. Till one day, to my great delight, one of the men said, "Larning is a fine thing: I should like my boy to have some larning, so as to grow up a good scholar, like Ned Tanner."

This was the very point at which I was aiming. For, beyond all doubt, it is to some extent with education as it is with food—the demand will always force a supply; and comparatively little is the use of schools till the parents see the benefit of instruction. The world is all wrong on this subject. But there are two ways of educating, or, say for the present, of teaching the poorer classes.

One way is to *foster the demand*, believing that "where there is a will there is a way:" for, it is far easier to provide a school, than to make the parents send the children. Lead them to ask for education. And when I see one man on a London cabstand reading a penny paper, and the rest looking on, it is plain to me that the cheap press is the available form of popular education. If the press is not pure absolutely, it is always purer than the low talk which for the hour it supersedes.

The other way of educating is to *force the supply*, as is done by influence or intimidation of the mother, or by encouragement with tea-feasts and prizes to tempt the children.

Now, all experience shows that the former of these two is the

right plan. *Foster the demand:* indeed, a bounty on every child who can read would soon call forth dames to teach, and with a strong interest to collect children. At all events, I would rather spend money on prizes than on schools: though a combination of the two plans would be better still. I would pay a dame so much a-week, with a premium for every child she taught to read.

What, and is reading the whole of education?

No—but it is one part; and often the only part which it is really practicable to provide. Add to this, reading is virtually like eyes to see and ears to hear; and, with thousands of the poor, it is the only means they have of learning the way of salvation.

I must here explain, that one of the greatest difficulties in my parish—one that received my earliest attention—was connected with the sons of small farmers—with lads like the Milfords already mentioned. Farmers can rarely afford a boarding-school, and the idea of a charity-school offends their pride. It is true, there is also the education of circumstances—of the shop, that requires quickness and attention; or of the busy town, with all the strife of tongues and clash of mind with mind. But even of this the farmer's son has very little. The life is that of a mere animal, with little to awaken or call forth the man.

However, I made sundry attempts, by a private class, sometimes in the school-room and sometimes at the Rectory: but it is hard to fill minds which have never been formed; and the boys used to sit staring at vacancy, and put on a smile of civility, when what I wanted was the fixed look of attention.

At last James and Archer came to see me, and we held a consultation; and the result was, that we made terms with the farmers to pay enough to enable us to provide an extra master in the parish school—the said school being raised in the scale of gentility by my forming one of a cycle of teachers for their express tuition. Colonel Kent, James Rochester, and Edward Elmore, were among my constant "under-masters;" Ellen and Mrs. Seymour, with Miss Rochester, also came to put them on their metal and bring their rural gallantry to bear, and insure attention to their reading lessons.

The only natural and effectual provision for the improvement of the farmer is that which is gradually taking place for the improvement of the land: namely, small farms merging into large, and small farmers falling under the direction and influence of men of larger capital and larger minds. It is this that will give a spur

to education, because agriculture will then be an exercise of intellect, and the race of boors will find small encouragement from men of energy and science.

This is the natural and the only sufficient remedy for the present state of things; though meanwhile we must be satisfied with temporary expedients, well aware that we are working against the stream or sowing seeds at a most ungenial season.

But the *Manton Herald* was my great resource. The only use of "larning" was to read the *Herald*. Accordingly I placed myself in communication with Mr. Foy, the editor, and submitted that his literary column might be adapted to a definite use and purpose. It should be the young person's column, or one of a tempting and improving kind. James and Archer and two other clerical friends also promised to assist from time to time, and to recommend the paper to the notice of their parishioners—a word or two being said about the scrupulous purity of all the columns which our connexion must imply.

My experience justifies me in saying that if the clergy—instead of vainly decrying a local newspapér which they cannot stop—would use their influence to make it better, they might speak through its columns to the farmer and his family in the chimney-corner with no little advantage.

And now the tea-room began to act upon the school—and not only so, but it helped to fill many a sitting in the church. "Our parson don't do all this for nothing," one man said: and so, gradually, the poor and the pastor drew nearer together. I do not say this was all the work of a day: but I am now speaking—and here I must crave indulgence for such a liberty with my chronology—as at the end of the seventh year, when the young people of the neighbourhood were enlisted on the side of the club, and the Poor Man's Club was no longer on its trial as a novelty, but had become part of the parish of Elkerton.

This was only one course which I adopted to plough up the fallows—to lessen the distances between rich and poor, and to break the ice of cold formality, and of that old-fashioned orthodoxy which condemned the clergy to be men in buckram; strangers to the poor man's way of thinking, and therefore powerless to touch the chords that vibrate to his heart.

It was remarked that Mrs. Jacques had not accepted our invitation to preside at one of the tea-tables. And sundry unkind speeches were made when her name was mentioned.

About this time we found that, though we did not mean to be

particularly economical, Martha's eggs became dearer and dearer; and some fowls we bought savoured too much of half-diet; and as to her butter, while she could say, "The Rectory doesn't complain," old Jacques could put up with an answer, though he saw the butter was not what it used to be: but, at last, we were just going to make a complaint, when all our discontent was turned into compassion by the news that a pig had broken in among the young turkeys and eaten up a large part of Mrs. Jacques' much-boasted "marriage-settlement." Some of the neighbouring farmers began to laugh, and say that Jacques had what they called a "regular poor man's wife," — that is, one who finds him poor and will keep him poor. This mishap stopped all complaint from us, but we began to fear the possible verdict of Manton market, of which we already had received a hint.

However, it soon appeared that our indulgence would not put off the evil day. The report that Martha made but a bad farmer's wife was now rife, indeed. Her marketing had been made a joke at the farmers' table at the Bell Inn. We heard, also, that quarrelling was rather frequent at the farm, and also that her establishment was reduced. Martha had no longer two servants, but one, and that only "a slut," — that is, a kind of workhouse apprentice, of so little use that Martha's place was now hard work indeed.

We also heard that Jacques and his family had said that mere "drudgery was all that the Parson's nursemaid was ever good for." This bad news was confirmed by the fact that Martha had become distant and reserved, avoiding on the Sunday, instead of seeking, our notice and attention. She was evidently altogether out of heart and spirits.

It seems very odd that we should eat bad butter out of politeness; but really, it was very bad before we positively gave it up: and then Ellen said she would rather eat dry bread, if by so doing she could save the poor creature from hearing from others the sad truth that at last was uttered in the most uncomplimentary words, namely, that "babies and butter required a very different kind of early experience."

CHAPTER XV.

SHOWING HOW FAIR-WEATHER HONESTY WILL NOT ALWAYS DO—AND HOW THE LAW IS A KIND OF WHIRLPOOL, INTO WHICH MANY A MAN HAS DRIFTED UNAWARES.

It was near the end of my second year, and there had been nothing very interesting for some time. Peace and prosperity are the worst times for the historian; wars and revolutions can alone give interest to his annals. And our in-door life had been very quiet since Martha, so long part and parcel of the Rectory, surrendered both herself and her savings'-bank money to the tender mercies of Jacques the farmer. The calmer the surface, the slighter the breeze that ripples it. But now, there was a matter by no means slight, but enough to make a stir for some weeks.

Farmer Jacques was first cousin to Farmer Ballard: and, in the opinion of Elkerton people, any stab to the reputation of the Ballards would make a cruel wound, and leave a very ugly scar on the scutcheon of the Jacqueses, too.

Well, early one morning I heard from my dressing-room such a chattering in the kitchen! The gardener had brought the news —Susan's version I received with my shaving-water—the same, with variations, was carried in no time to the mistress, and something as wide of the mark as "Ma—poor Martha's to go to prison," was soon prattled in the nursery.

All I could learn clearly from the gardener was, that something had occurred at Manton market the evening before, and Farmer Ballard's wife was accused of robbery, and had been up before the Mayor.

The whole story was such a jumble of facts, and various names were so mixed together, that I soon saw that Ellen would eat no breakfast unless I hurried to Martha's house, and ascertained that she was clear of trouble, at all events.

The story I thus collected was as follows:—

About twelve o'clock the day before, Mrs. Ballard was presiding, as usual, over a very creditable array of ducks and chickens, eggs and butter, bacon and black-puddings, in the market-place of the borough of Manton, when Mrs. Wing, landlady of the Castle Hotel, put down her muff—a real sable—cheapened a turkey with other purchases, and handing the same to Timothy, the "boots," paid for all, and took it away with her, being very much alive to all the tricks of the place.

One hour after, our landlady missed her muff, and sent Tim to Mrs. Ballard's to fetch it.

Mrs. Ballard replied, she knew nothing about the muff.

But Mrs. Wing had not kept the Castle Hotel "to her time o' life" to put up with such an answer as that; so, like a "woman of business," she went herself.

Mrs. Wing said she lost her muff.

Mrs. Ballard said she had seen no muff.

Mrs. Wing's assertion, and Mrs. Ballard's reply, were each of them made again and again—so often, indeed, that if Mrs. Ballard had any memory at all, it must have been pretty well jogged by Mrs. Wing.

Mrs. Wing was sure she left it at Mrs. Ballard's stall; but still—like other people who say they are sure—she betrayed some little doubt, from the fact that she went up and down the market and inquired for the muff of several other persons of whom she had dealt that morning; and, by the time she had returned from her fruitless search, Mrs. Wing said she was "certain sure" she left it as aforesaid.

And now angry words arose; Mrs. Ballard talking about her character, and Mrs. Wing about her "real sable," the last gift of her dear departed husband (for it is wonderful how often landladies are widows), and, "were she not a lone woman," no one would dare serve her so.

During the strife of tongues, a market-woman opposite stepped across, with a very set-me-down expression of countenance, and said,—

"Why, Mrs. Ballard, you must have seen the muff; for I pointed it out to you myself, and you observed, 'Yes, it must be taken care of.'"

"Oh, that muff!" said Mrs. Ballard. "If that's the muff the bother is about, I gave it to a woman who claimed it as her own shortly after."

"Then," said Mrs. Wing, "I'll set the constable to work, and he shall find it in double-quick time."

And now all the market was in a state of excitement. There were people enough to run for the constable, who no sooner came than he found the place something between a mob and a riot; so, without considering about any definite charge, he said, Mrs. Ballard and Mrs. Wing had better come with him to the Town-hall; and, as the Mayor kept a shop close by, he would ask him to step over and settle it.

The law, criminal as well as civil, is a curious kind of whirlpool, into which many a person has drifted unawares.

As yet no harm was done, and none would have been done, had not Mrs. Ballard's son-in-law, a small wine-merchant, rushed in, threatening Mrs. Wing with all the pains and penalties of defamation. "Oh, save me from my friends!"

Mrs. Wing, in downright self-defence, sent for her solicitor "to speak for her," and this gentleman put the whole case so strongly before his Worship, and in the form of a regular accusation, that the Mayor appointed the next day for a hearing before all the bench.

Still, little knowing the turn the affair would take, Mrs. Wing was all the night haunted with an apprehension of an action for defamation, and a thousand pounds damages!

When Ellen heard my story, she asked what I thought would result, and what could be done?—Poor Martha had made a bad match of it enough in marrying old Jacques. A little pride of family was her chief solace; and could her kinswoman in possibility be branded as a thief?

My answer was by no means encouraging, and soon Martha came for my assistance; for, the indignation with which all the Jacques family had gone to bed overnight had turned into gloomy forebodings as to Mrs. Ballard's liberty next morning. My advice was to make the quarrel up—to keep it out of court at all hazards—and if Mrs. Ballard, by carelessness, had given up the muff to another, rather to pay for it, and quiet Mrs. Wing, than risk consequences so serious.

All this time I had no doubt Mrs. Ballard was innocent. It seemed she had given the property to the wrong owner, and would not confess it. How could she want so handsome a muff for herself? She could not use it. Where was the temptation?

In this way I reasoned to Uncle Ben, who was soon called to our councils.

"The woman's a thief, and no mistake," said Uncle Ben. "'What should she want it for?' you ask. Why, to keep it till her peddler comes round, to be sure. Every finger's a fish-hook

—'findings, keepings,' is their maxim. After all, it is quite as honest as one member of a fashionable London club—and nothing is more common—walking off with an umbrella not his own."

The hour was now come that we should all go off to Manton together, to hear more of the matter. But by the time we reached the High Street we found the stream coming the other way.

We did not know which to pity most. Mrs. Ballard was bound over to appear at the sessions; and Mrs. Wing, who had no idea of doing more than clearing herself of a charge of defamation of character, was bound over to prosecute!

Mrs. Wing would rather have lost twenty muffs than do such a thing.

Uncle Ben's legal experience argued very ill of any prospect of acquittal; so, I felt I had a hard part to play in consoling the Ballards and the Jacqueses—our poor servant Martha included.

It was just three weeks to the sessions, and it was lucky for me it was not longer; for, every day, some of the family came to the Rectory to ask my advice, or rather to blow off their superfluous steam, and give vent to their boiling indignation, and not seldom to ease the growing apprehensions which the remarks of the lawyers, as well as the bench, had tended seriously to increase.

One thing I observed was, that every one in my position in society—except Uncle Ben, who always took a low view of public morals—thought Mrs. Ballard never could have been guilty of such a thing, and must be innocent; whereas, every one in her own position of life looked knowing, and thought her guilt nothing so hard to conceive.

Farmer Jacques (the husband's cousin) was as anxious as if his own wife were in jeopardy; for, already an unfeeling taunt about "gaol-birds in the family" had been made by a neighbour in an angry mood. So, Farmer Jacques could not rest; he was always going about and talking to every one—either quoting what "our Parson said," or collecting opinions to bring, next visit, to me.

"Well, John Cave," I said one day to a farmer, as I was dealing for some hay, "I suppose that, after all your experience on juries and at assizes, they have been to you about this muff story?"

"Yes, sir, Jacques is in great trouble, and he came, first thing, and asked my advice about the defence, and talked of their innocence, 'like the unborn babe,' and all that."

"And what was your opinion about the defence?"

"Why, sir, what I said was, 'Farmer Jacques, look sharp, and send the muff back again—that's my advice.' 'But she has not got it; we are wholly innocent,' he answered pretty quick. 'Then,' said I, 'if that won't do, put a five-pound note into the lining.' 'But how can she, when she is innocent?' he answers. 'Then,' I said, with a bit of a squint, 'try and find it.'"

"I am afraid you are a bad comforter, John Cave."

"I have no opinion of these borough juries," said Cave; "they know all about us, before ever they go into court. Perhaps they know John Ballard sold a bad cow, or a mouldy lot of hay; so they might put all that along with the muff story, and try his missus for corn and hay and muff, all of it together."

As it drew near the day of trial our old servant, Martha Jacques, was in a state of fearful excitement as to the fate of her kinswoman. Farmer Ballard had always stood forth as a respectable yeoman—one of the most punctual and important at the audit-day. He drove voters to the county poll, and sometimes returned thanks for the agricultural interest at the Mayor's dinner. So, the idea that a Ballard or a Jacques could stand at the bar with common thieves—this was dreadful of itself; and the bare possibility of being found guilty and sentenced like a felon, this was too cruel to contemplate.

"Now I do pity this poor woman," said Uncle Ben. "She had quite honesty enough for the general temptations of life. She is more honest than many fine ladies who beggar their milliners. She stole nothing; only it was carelessly thrust upon her, and she did not return it: so she has run her head against the law of the land. But, believe me, there is no chance of acquittal."

"I can't believe it," said Ellen. "If she is innocent, something will appear in her favour."

When the day came, the Ballards and the Jacqueses put on their very best appearance, and rattled away in their tax-carts, and formed a strong escort and an imposing support "to see," as they said, "Mrs. Ballard's character cleared in open court."

At first some common, ragged female tramp was tried for stealing linen off a line, and being sentenced to a term of imprisonment, stood aside in the dock.

And then Mary Ballard was called on. Mary Ballard's solicitor answered for her; and Mrs. Wing's solicitor, who had been instructed not to press the case, but let her off if he could, tried to commence without the pain of placing Mrs. Ballard by the side of the tramp at the bar. But the Recorder immediately exclaimed,—

"Officer, place the prisoner at the bar: there is no respect of persons here!"

Mrs. Ballard grew deadly pale when, for the first time, she felt herself in custody, and removed from the protection of her friends.

Uncle Ben then said, in a low tone of voice,—

"Now I know she has no chance, from a glance at that jury."

"Why so, uncle?"

"Four or five of them have an uncommonly good opinion of themselves, and would gladly be thought sharp fellows; so, if they don't see guilt in the evidence, they will feel it a reflection on themselves. And that man with an unstarched cravat is a dissenting preacher in a small way, and he will want to 'improve the occasion' next Sunday."

Unhappily, the lawyer was right. Even the disposition not to bear hard upon the prisoner, made the speech for the prosecution far more telling than if it had been violent and vindictive. The evidence was by no means strong; still, they could not leave well alone, but put a boy into the witness-box to swear he saw Mrs. Ballard give up the muff. This evidence broke down: for, the Recorder—suspecting the character of the evidence as well as the connivance of the prosecution—sharply cross-questioned the boy, who became frightened, and confessed that "he thought he saw it, but was not sure," and that Mrs. Ballard had promised him "something handsome" to swear as he did!

Of course this raised a fatal prejudice against the prisoner, and startled every one to find such a foe to all compromise in the judge.

The end of all was that Mrs. Ballard was found guilty. And, after a long lecture from the judge, commenting on the sin of false witness, and alluding to the respectability of her family, to which they all responded,—the farmers with tearful eyes, and poor Martha and the women of the families by convulsive sobs—the sentence was two months' imprisonment in the borough gaol!

This was a sad blow, not only to the kindly feelings, but to the pride and respectability of my parishioners. Still, they would not believe her guilty, but set to work to memorialise the Recorder, and, eventually, the Home Secretary; for to procure her discharge one week before the end of her sentence would be a triumph for those two families. Of course, they had persons envious of their position and eager to rise by their fall, like other persons of higher grade, and many a consultation was held at the Rectory on the subject of reversing the verdict—for, the Par-

sonage is ever the house of counsel and of comfort in every sorrow — but all was in vain: I paid some painful visits to the gaol, and she protested her innocence to the last.

In the course of the year the Ballards left the neighbourhood. Some persons pitied the family, and believed the mother innocent. But in course of time two evil deeds came to light — the one I knew only by hearsay, but there could be no kind of doubt of the other.

The first was, that my friend George Brown, who always was fond of a bargain, bought a couple of fowls, with very young heads and necks most artfully and mendaciously inserted, and sewn on to two very tough and old bodies! and he thought by the description, that the old woman who sold them was Mrs. Ballard.

The other was, that Mrs. Ballard had once more to appear at the bar of justice; and though she was acquitted, her husband was convicted of sheep-stealing — a tub full of salted mutton being found in his house. And this insight into the lady's true character, I think, affords a pretty good commentary on the story of injured innocence and our landlady's muff.

For some time, the reports of both Martha and her husband had been growing worse and worse. At the last audit, Farmer Jacques positively could not show. A great downfall, indeed — especially now that the family had received such a stab in the region of its respectability as the imprisonment of poor Mrs. Ballard. And as to Martha, every one was talking about her, as to what had probably become of her savings, as also of the sort of work she did now, which she would never put her hands to at the Rectory.

There is a strong attraction in a happy countenance, but a downright repulsion in a wretched one; so, without meaning to fly before the frowns of her fortune, we did not very often take our once favourite walk over Jacques' Common. One day, however, having an order for a load of straw, Ellen and I once more inquired for Mrs. Jacques. As no one seemed to hear our knocking at the front door, we went round to the back, through the yard, to find some one to take our message.

All of a sudden we came upon the smell of washing, and saw some one through the cloud of steam shrink back hastily, as if to avoid us; but almost at the same moment, and as if recollecting herself, and with a desperate effort, a poor drab of a woman, without any gown on, and only in her stays — her hair all loose,

cap half off her head, and arms scalded white by the soapsuds—rushed forward maniacally to meet us, exclaiming, amidst sobs of sorrow and vexation,—

"Yes, my dear master and mistress, you shall see me! 'Tis me—'tis Martha Bromley that was! Look at me. I'll hide it no longer; it's only my just punishment; I deserve it all. A fool I am, and a fool I have been! I am come to this! yes, down to very suds and the dirt! I'm treated like a parish 'prentice—not a bit better. And now my money's gone—gone! Yes, every penny of it! for all I worked two-and-thirty years to save it; and I am laughed at by every one, and called 'nuss-maid' all round the family!"

"But things may not be so very bad," said Ellen. "Have patience, and perhaps, Mrs. Jacques ——"

"Mrs. Jacques! Oh, never no more of 'Jacques.' Oh, call me Bromley. Dear Mrs. Austin, call me Bromley. I hate the name of Jacques. I repent the day I was a Jacques, and hope never to be Jacques no more."

Of course, here was a trouble beyond our power to alleviate; and after some such condolence as may be easily supposed, we bent our steps homeward, not much refreshed by our afternoon's walk to this scene of misery and ruin.

A few weeks passed, and we had not quite given up hoping that Farmer Jacques might recover his position, till we heard that, the worse he found things at market, the more tipsy he came home. His ruin, therefore, seemed merely a question of weeks or months. In this state of things, one day little Freddy came running in to his mamma, and saying, "Somebody has put great A B C papers all over Martha's door, and poor Martha cried about it very much."

"What can the child mean?" said Ellen.

"I have a sad foreboding," I replied, "that the blow has come at last. I heard of an action for debt, and judgment by default, and I fear this is a sale under execution."

We soon heard from the servant that such was the case. A peremptory sale was announced of all the farming stock and implements of Greenaway farm; and Jacques had absconded, not without suspicion of having taken with him all the ready money he could realise by forced sales below the market-price, which had been the talk of Manton all the week past.

And what was to become of Martha? Some said she had had warning enough, and it served her right—some said she might go to the "Bastille," for so they called our Union; some

said she must take her chance—and some said there might be a subscription—but who would start one, and who would give to it, they could not tell! While the greater part enjoyed the talk and the excitement of the thing, and spoke about the sale, and what bargains they might buy there.

As to ourselves, we both said she had no claim on the Rectory—not in the least; we said, too, she was not the same person for a servant that she had been, and her husband might come after her, or she might want to go after him; and many other difficulties did we suggest: but still the question remained to be answered, What is the poor woman to do?

"Yours are such practical sermons," said Ellen, musing; "that is the awkward part of it. You are always preaching about carrying the Gospel into everything, and adorning the Gospel in all things."

"And, therefore, you mean to say that the sight of a good old servant in want or misery, from which a little self-denial ——"

"Exactly so," said Ellen. "So, suppose if we ask Mrs. Seymour what she thinks of the matter. The Rectory, you know," she said, rather satirically, "must not water the coals; the Rectory must not connive at bribery; it must be a model—a pattern household of all righteous dealing—the more so from the selfishness that casts its dark shade around! Remember all this, Harry."

The reader knows what must result from principles such as these, when the Parson's memory is yet further jogged by a good wife. In one month's time Martha—for we dropped the name of Jacques—was once more established in the service of the Rectory of Elkerton.

CHAPTER XVI.

FAMILY CARES AND WORRIES — THE PARSON IS EXPECTED TO MIND EVERYBODY'S BUSINESS, AS IF HE HAD NOT ENOUGH OF HIS OWN.

It is commonly said that clergymen are not men of business. Now, though every large town has a Rector or two who could give most country gentlemen a lesson, still, true it is that clergymen live comparatively free from all that pounds-shillings-and-pence chicanery which sharpens the wits and blunts the feeling of other men.

But, men of business or not, certain it is, that there is a general conspiracy to hamper the clergy with the most distracting of all business. For, the Parson of the family is the man for the lawyer, who says, "Here is a safe man — you know where to find him," and "he has a character at stake" — so down they set him, almost without asking leave, as Executor or Trustee in every family arrangement.

One day, when some honest, unsuspecting family-man had, with the best intentions, put his name in the wrong place — for, he put it to a deed giving 5000*l.* of Cousin John's money to Cousin Thomas — Lord Eldon, as he made an order on the poor man to make good the loss, felt his heart quite softened, and observed, "Well, I don't know who would be a trustee."

But, somebody in a family must be a trustee; for an estate, like a child, must sometimes be put out "to nurse;" and it is only by the help of trustees — it is only by good, prudent men becoming bound under those cruel bills of pains and penalties, yclept bills filed in Chancery, to hold fast the principal, and dole out nervously the interest — men who are often called "Cross-patch," or "Sourcrout," for their trouble, and classed with tax-gatherers, pikemen, or male duennas — that we have been able to do without a genteel ward in our workhouses, crowded to over-

flowing with wives who were too confiding to ask questions, and with husbands too tender-hearted to alarm them, till the last penny was drawn from the bank.

At the time of which I am speaking, I was trustee for four different parties, and acting trustee—that is, the only trustee who would "submit to be bothered,"—in three out of four of those trusts.

It is easy to say, Hand all the business over to the solicitor to save trouble, and charge his bill to the fund. It is easy to say, Keep to the letter of the law, and risk nothing: for, mortal man, though born to trouble, is always yearning for a quiet life; and—since the favour you are asked is certain and immediate, while the danger you incur seems shadowy and remote—a man who has rather a heart for a friend than a head for law, in course of ten years finds, "good, easy man," his liabilities falling rather thick upon him.

"Well," said Uncle Ben one day, as he saw me with that horrid tin-box on the table, "you would not be a magistrate, which brings society and county consequence, but you would hamper yourself with all this business—quite as distracting, and ten times more dangerous."—The lawyer might well say so. My table was covered with papers, if not parchments, and nearly every post brought a letter on some nervous piece of business to spoil my appetite for breakfast: and, as to things spiritual or writing sermons, wonderful is the power of a lawyer's letter to fill your whole mind with things of earth.

Cousin Jane wrote one day to ask me to sell out fifty pounds of her consols to buy a piano! She was sure that money could be advanced for education, and a piano would count most plausibly as music lessons.

I had before raised 400*l.*, rather irregularly, for that young scapegrace, Josiah Austin, to save the loss of his commission and utter ruin; and the advice and indemnities to make me and old Townsend as safe as his solicitor required, cost 45*l.*—the expenses of raising 400*l.*, and, as it were, just for the receipt! In this affair I had thirty-three bills to collect and pay for him. I had endless correspondence with "old Crabstick"—for so he called my co-trustee—who at first wrote briefly, "I can't be troubled; let him have his deserts." My poor head was one thoroughfare for trust-releases and indemnities, and bills for cigars, regimental tailoring, trinkets, and perfumery, mess-accounts, and debts to agent, and the like, till I really think I could have learnt the habits of the animal from the items of his bills.

Alas! poor Jo Austin! However, I have my reward. Jo went on steadily ever after. In the way of giving bail for his good behaviour, he took to himself a wife. He said he knew he could not afford it, but since old Crabstick said, with no less truth than impudence, that he ought not to be at large without a keeper, it was cheaper altogether than being single; for he saved it in mess-bills and cigars. He was a fine fellow was poor Jo. *Was!* yes, *was!* He was delivered from this world of trouble five years after, and his bones lie whitening on the banks of the Alma.

Yes, I say it was to Jo a "world of trouble," because a pounds-shillings-and-pence world, and worse still, a world of bills and post-obits, credits and acceptances—a world where you can reap before you have sown, fly on paper wings, and exhaust all before you, and, picking out all the plums, leave the rest of the cake of life insipid enough to choke you.

We live in what is called a high state of civilisation. But suppose that it is: Jo was out of place in a nation of shopkeepers. Prudence comes easy and natural to a cold-blooded animal, but to a good, warm-hearted creature, whose sanguine vision purples the future with the richest of all prismatic colouring, this world is troublous indeed. So much for civilisation; it is very hard on some people, "that's a fact." For, only put Jo in a wild country of lions and tigers, and raise a cry that a bear had half-eaten a baby, and all Lombard Street would be a fool to him; but, in an age of Jews and land-sharks instead of lions and tigers, and attorneys and solicitors instead of crocodiles and alligators, Jo had no chance at all.

But my troubles did not end with poor Jo's. For Jo's "encumbrances"—that is, his wife with her two children, who had not a friend in the world, and, as to all management, was as blind as a kitten—were literally left "to darkness and to me."

With all these responsibilities, ties are multiplying so quickly that, at the same rate, I shall be fast bound, like Gulliver, in a few years more. Even now my heart is like the central telegraph, responsive to a thousand wires, by which any one can give a shock. Or, as James tells me, I am internally like a barrel-organ, which all the family may set, and grind away to their own dismal tune.

Why should any man—any man with a heart as sensitive as mine—wish to live till he is old? When I passed my Great Go at Oxford I well remember the ecstasy of delight with which I kicked a whole heap of analyses of ethics, history, and logic, into the bottom of my cupboard: and if the departing spirit is con-

scious of all it escapes and leaves behind, how must it exult in "shuffling off this mortal coil" of trusteeships or executorships, quarter-days and dividends, and all the nervous *ifs* and *buts*, and figures complicated, that have haunted it to the grave!

Well, Ellen began to be quite angry to see me so persecuted. Letters half hid my bread and butter every morning, and, meanwhile, she could get nothing but short answers in the way of conversation, and said it was like talking to a man in the clouds; and, what was more, things seemed to her to grow worse and worse. Fanny's affairs were now added to the rest, and generally some one wanted to know when the dividends would be paid, and whether they could not draw more one quarter and less another; besides endless inquiries for more interest to be made by some new company, got up by particular friends, who declared it was safe as the Bank of England itself.

I was already pretty well wound up and enmeshed in the fine-spun web and toils of the law, when one morning I saw the coach stop near my gate, and away ran Tommy Blucher—as commanded by Coachee, "slick away up to the Rectory"—with an ominous brown-paper parcel, and letter inside to the following effect:—

"Pray, come immediately: your poor father's malady has reached an alarming height."

I was not long in arranging with my curate, and then galloping the short way across the Common to Bowdon. I rode, I have often thought, in a great state of excitement: for, the usual gaps had been fresh thorned; and what if any one had only espied the Parson of Elkerton at a kind of steeple-chase over hedges and ditches while his father lay breathing his last!—And oh! how I strained my eyes at the first sight of the house for the closed shutters, or other indication that all was over. I was puzzled at seeing Thomas digging some celery in the garden, and the butcher's pony and basket just going to the house. But all these things must be; for, to reverse some solemn words, "In the midst of *death* we are in *life*." Still, this caused a revulsion of feeling, and yet more so when I heard my mother speaking in her clear and usual tone, and ending composedly some directions, as she held me by the hand to finish her message.

"I am glad you are come, Harry; we must not give way—we must do our best, and leave nothing untried—but Mr. Willis gives me no hopes. Some doctors make the worst of everything. But Mr. Willis never does. Indeed, when your poor brother died, one would have thought his doctor was going to cure him to the very last, but——"

Then sister Emily came down, but, ah! how different! My mother was old in sorrow; but Emily yet untried. While young we never feel we can part; but in age we are yearly prepared to sever. So, my mother was calm and serene, as one long buffeted on life's ocean stands while the ship is falling asunder: but poor Emily's heart was heaving and throbbing with emotions hard to gulp down, and no doubt felt, as I did, sad doubts and forebodings of the future. And money! money! money! "How we should be left," and the cares and anxieties that for years had seemed to nestle and to give their torpedo touch from those mysterious drawers and pigeon-holes — all this entered no little into our distractions.

I then went to my father's room, and found him sitting up in his arm-chair by the fire, and not looking much worse than I had seen him before. Yet he soon implied that his days, and indeed his hours, were numbered. He said, I and my mother were named as his executors, and entered into explanations, with which I urged him to go through, that his mind might be wholly given to another world. It is wonderful how tranquil a man's mind becomes when he has just made his will, or put the last touch to his worldly affairs. "Now," he said, "this is at rest for ever: things are not very bad, though they might be better; and, as to that, I have no doubt the Catchall Railway shares will get up again when all the branches begin to pay."

He lived five days.—For a son to be spiritual adviser to his own father is a difficult position, indeed. But as to advice, it was little wanted: he knew "the way, the truth, and the life," and his duty to God, as well as I could know it. He had also strong, old-fashioned notions of his duty to man, too:—he desired that Betty Frame, our errand-woman, should have a new pair of strong shoes at Christmas, the same as ever: and the five days passed between those family gatherings around the bed—all that should be, things too sacred to name—and a repeated calling for his check-book; once that cousin Jane should not wait for her little annuity, another time to pay Twining for his last packet of tea—but the two last days there was no more of the kind to do, and most happily so. A change had come over him—that wonderful change, and that merciful arrangement of Providence, which I have often observed—though few persons know of it—is sent to loose the ties, whether of care or of affection, and to deaden the feeling before the hour to part.

Some question was asked, which we feared might have caused an anxious thought; but the old man not only spoke, but looked,

as if he now felt quite indifferent. Yes,' he was literally dead to this world: his race was run, and all that nervous care which is ordained to give swiftness for the race, was therefore all withdrawn, and not left needlessly to vex him. Even so, at the same last stage of ebbing life, have I known the tender mother hear her infant cry, and say, That cry does not pierce me now—such feeling all has passed away.

"AND THE TIME DREW NIGH THAT ISRAEL MUST DIE."

My father had sunk quietly to sleep—and we had gone down to dinner about six in the evening—when a quick step was heard upon the stairs. It was my mother, who still kept watch. She had heard the stertorous breathing, felt his hand, and found it cold. Soon, we were all around the bed: the breathing grew fainter and fainter, and the features more livid; till at last a feather would not move at his lips. We listened for some signs of life, but all was still—quite still. All eyes were turned to my mother, and we led her as soon as we could from the room.

Before long, Tom and I returned for one more look. There lay the watch on the table beside him—we had known that watch from childhood. It seemed quite a part of my father, yet that was unconsciously ticking on still.

"Well, Harry," said Tom, "it is done now, and well done; and I would have no hands in bringing him back again if I could."

No. I could have said, as over Lear,—

> "Vex not his ghost: O let him pass! he hates him
> That would upon the rack of this tough world
> Stretch him out longer——"

And most heartily did I feel, Thank God for this deliverance! What though shares go down to nothing, ships sink, or banks break—that pulse now will beat no faster. What though thoughtless sons or thankless relations clamour for the aid it were folly to attempt, that brain will no more throb nor that heart ache.

The spirit had fled far from the turmoil of life, like the beautiful sea-bird, which, amidst the tumult of the elements, soars easily away and is at rest.

* * * * * *

Behold me once more at Elkerton. The very first Sunday after I returned, Mr. Williams was called away, and I was compelled to do the whole duty. There was an unusual stillness,

partly from curiosity, partly from sympathy, when I entered the reading-desk. The first Sunday at church, after any severe loss, is trying to all persons; but, as to the minister, who, by reading, must betray any tremulous emotion, and who fears all the while lest some touching passage may choke him by a sudden gush of feeling, the trial to him is hard indeed. However, I went through the service, no little exhausted by the effort.

And now business letters came thick upon me.

Little as sons wish to lose their parents, I believe there is a vague idea that, at all events, we shall have our own way, and a kind of liberty to qualify our affliction.

Accordingly, I had my own way, with full command over my poor father's purse and property, and unusual powers to buy or sell, and shift or change any investment, quite at my discretion.

But, unhappily, while I had my own way, I had one thing more—I had succeeded also to the cares and anxieties, the vexations, worrying, and importunities which dodged my father to the very grave. Brother Tom—who, I said, was always in scrapes; and Emily—whose allowance would never quite do; and Fanny—who had always a reason for borrowing before pension-day,—all were at me at once, and all found me far more of a "fidget," far more "afraid of parting with a penny," than my father had been before me.

When the head of a family dies—especially within the tempting sphere of the Catchall Railway—it is common to hear that the wife and children "are reduced," or "must be economical," or, more plausibly, must rub up or learn the true French accent, by visiting those cheap parts of the Continent where nothing but *patois* is heard. This change of circumstances, among other ways, happens as follows:—

The family fortune, of say 20,000*l.*, is found to be in mines, shares, and other collapsing investments, that pay five or six per cent, and the income looks like 1000*l.* a-year. And the father lives as over a barrel of gunpowder—being cross, surly, crabbed, and impatient at every rumour and every share-list, even if no harm comes of it—to the day of his death.

No sooner is he dead than the executor takes a very cold and matter-of-fact view of things, and says he must put all quite safe.

Whereupon the 20,000*l.* in figures changes into 12,000*l.* in fact, and this safe little capital produces an equally safe little dividend, say 400*l.* a-year—instead of 1000*l.*

This will give a general view of the estate I had to manage, and the news I had to break, while every one around was asking

if we were not very happy to come into our fortunes, and hoped we liked our legacies!

Happily for me, I hated the very name of railway — the Catchall affair beyond all others. I had been credibly informed how the Directors made ducks and drakes of the money, and how, when about to be called to account in one case, they had hired a barrister from the funds of the Company and put shares in his name, to give him a right to talk against time! — I had also heard from an eye-witness how, by a certain north-country line, two prize-fighters were employed to make a sham quarrel and fight till the meeting was like a bear-garden, and the chairman had an excuse to adjourn!

So, instantly, I realised on all the Catchall shares. Oh! how many a heartache did that save me: for, down, down, down they dropped like mercury before a storm, to a point that would have been almost ruin to my poor mother.

I treated other property, but not all at once — I had not nerve to do so — in the same way. But meanwhile my mind was distracted by my responsibilities, and many a day the sight of that long column near the City article has made the newspaper shake and crackle in my hand — you would think it was a gazette of killed and wounded, and I was searching for the slain!

What has an elderly family man to live for? Every week after my father's death did I inwardly ejaculate, "Heaven be praised: *he* cannot know it! Heaven be praised that he is saved from this!" And as often have I envied him the silence of the tomb.

However, my mother could save nothing for the present by leaving Bowdon, and so we sent her two of the children to divert her mind — nothing would do half so well — and I put off the worst of the news for the present.

CHAPTER XVII.

HOW "POLITICS" AKIN TO "KNAVISH TRICKS" DEMORALIZED MY PARISH AND MADE ME UNPOPULAR AS A MAR-PLOT—AND HOW VERY LOW OUR COUNTRY PEOPLE COULD "STOOP," BUT NOT "CONQUER" AFTER ALL.

THERE is a very general opinion that, when a clergyman is in hot water, it can be nobody's fault but his own. The very name of minister implies mercy and loving-kindness too winning to offend—the very name of pastor implies a perfect model of rural innocence, with his staff in his hand, moving about happily amidst his flock, all as quiet and peaceable as lambs.

Unfortunately, truth compels us to add to this picture one feature; namely, that there are some wolves among the flock ready to prey upon the lambs, and looking not a little as if they would eat the shepherd if they dared, for sympathising with the weaker instead of the stronger animal—add this feature only and the idea of pastor will be true to life.

This new feature in the pastor's life, it will soon appear, is never more striking than when what is called "the sense of the country" is to be taken at a General Election.

Supposing that representatives really did represent the sense, or the nonsense, of the people who send them to parliament, our laws would be worthy of Bedlam—or, perhaps, Newgate. Certainly, the members for Manton would have only represented malt and hops, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness—riot, drunkenness, and the seven deadly sins.

My feelings were always strongly Conservative. I do not mean that kind of Conservatism which condemns the growing child to the same tight jacket till the buttons fly off; still less would my respectable Tory sit hard and fast on the safety-valve till the machinery was blown into atoms; but I mean, that I always had a strong instinct against everything of a mob-ocratic

tendency. Still, I have ventured to maintain on all occasions that a Rector has some higher duty to discharge between rich and poor, than simply to teach John to touch his hat to the Squire, or to hold through thick and thin that gentlefolks can do no wrong.

And now the day was coming on for the election of two members to represent the borough of Manton in Parliament; and already the freeman's wife could get credit at the chandler's shop,—the twelve Stubbses had begun to discount the customary six pounds a-head, by increasing very rapidly their rows of chalk hieroglyphics behind the door of the Stag public-house,—the landlord had already begun to reckon his gains—the Elkerton pulse beat quicker and quicker—and many a brain as thick as pease-pudding was now heaving and working with the yeast of new ideas, and charged from that battery peculiar to election time.

An election is a kind of fool's holiday. All that Horton and men like Horton cared for, was to talk large about "good of the county," "interest at stake," "my friend, our candidate," "down with those Radicals," and the like, as also to parade themselves and liveries as influential county-men, as they drove voters to the poll, and then to appear among the carriages drawn up about the hustings.

To suppose that above one in ten of such men can do more than "follow my leader," or echo the watchword of their party, is absurd. Still, however indifferent to principles, they were by no means indifferent to themselves. Once committed to a contest, they felt it disgraceful not to win, and they were much in the mood of the Irish beggar hurraying after a public meeting, who said, "Faith, no matter what it was all about, for didn't we jist bate 'em?"

In the town of Manton, there were one banker and five solicitors, including Uncle Ben. Old Cobbold, the banker, was a very hot politician, but no election ever passed over without Benjamin Austin reminding the people how he had caught the banker in his own trap. For Cobbold had promised to tell the Whigs if the Tories began to draw. Whereupon Ben Austin paid in 3000*l.*, the usual cost of the votes, and never drew a farthing from that fund; so, the Whigs thought to save their money too; but when the poll closed, they found, to their dismay, that bribery from a private store had turned the scale in favour of the Tories.

Of course this banker and the five solicitors returned any one they chose. Not a few of the voters wanted occasional accom-

modation at the bank, and old Cobbold had more than once shown, that to vote against his party would involve a quiet lecture in "the sweating-room," and an instant closing of account; and, as to voting against the solicitors, no one knew better than these gentlemen whom to send to canvass the man of shaky fortune, or how to hound on some eager creditor and drive an unpopular tradesman into the meshes of the law. Exclusive dealing was an engine of another kind.—"I have seventy good paying customers," said Richard Whittock, the small tailor, "besides jobs and mending—now it takes fifty of these accounts to pay my rent and fixed expenses—the other twenty make all my profit: so, if you deprive me only of ten, I must shut up shop."—Mr. Horton was the man who published an infamous list of voters, heading the same with—oh! horrible profanity!—a suggestion that a certain set of voters should be avoided by all the friends of the Established Church!

No one who has not witnessed, can believe how party-spirit will infuriate and brutalise a small town. No sooner was the canvass over, than the people, lately so quiet and peaceable, were like so many dogs with a bone cast for a scramble into the kennel. This was not all from the mere shadow of principles or party names. For, the partisans on both sides had solid substance to fight for—there were petty places that might fall to the gift of the members; and as to these places, even men who could not hold them for themselves, dreaded with fiendish jealousy lest they should go to the other party. Every evil passion was let loose, and they hated each other with a perfect hatred. Family history was raked up, and deeds of shame long since forgotten—a father's dishonour, or a mother or a sister's shame—were cruelly dragged to light.—This man's money was the inheritance of fraud and extortion, and that man's preferment was the wages of infamy or ingratitude to his best of friends.

Well, indeed, might the clergy dread that dire Saturnalia—calling the blackest feelings from the dark abyss of the stirred and troubled heart—which the bitter struggle of an election was known to involve.

Add to this, I foresaw with no pleasant feelings that the canvass would extend to my parish, and that Mr. Horton and party would not scruple to send to the poll the twelve Stubbses, among others, with a bribe in one hand and ready to take the Bible in the other.

Uncle Ben, in consequence of a split in the Manton Cabinet, stood professionally aloof from this election, but was still in a

position to let me see behind the scenes. The solicitors, he said, and a large staff of agents, would have untold gold at their command; and since book-keeping and bribery could hardly go together, no little of it would stick to their own fingers. As to the members to be dealt with from the Carlton or the Reform Club, all they wanted was some easy dupes. They cared no more about the talent of their representative than a black-leg cares about the breed of a horse.

All this Mr. Horton and the county knew perfectly well; but, for all that, time after time would they shut their eyes to such practices, talk large of their principles, ventilate their common-places, and look as large and important as if they and "the landed interest" formed the pillars of the state.

In this state of things, Mr. Horton and Mr. Elmore — with Bulkeley, who acted jackal to these county lions; as also with Cholmeley, who wore a half grin, by which he meant to imply to me that he jumped with the humour of every man in turn — came one day to canvass me.

"Writing sermons! writing sermons! are you, indeed, Austin!" said Horton, in a patronising tone. "Surely you haven't got to the end of your stock yet?"

"Faith, my friend, you should do like the doctors," said Cholmeley. "Don't trouble to change the physic; but just change the label."

"Sermons must suit the occasion, gentlemen," I said rather quietly; "and the present is a time when all persons, rich as well as poor, require to be reminded of certain duties; above all, not to 'follow a multitude to do evil.'"

This remark, and my way of saying it, brought them gravely to the business in hand. My interest with "the Elkerton gang," such was the honourable name of the freemen near the quarries, was what they required. It was also hinted that I should join them in calling on — that is, in intimidating — the grocer and the poulterer, and all the tradesmen who served me in Manton.

In answer to my questions — for I had been informed of the fact — they admitted that the first attempt at a Tory candidate resulted in the appearance of a certain Captain Collins; and after they had placarded his principles, and stuck his name at the head of a cut-and-dried requisition, he was found in a state of disgusting inebriety; and that, too, in the lowest slums of the town!

"But," said Horton, "we sent him about his business directly, for — we will have character — we insist upon character here."

"Well," I said, "but they are not usually so particular in

Manton as all this. Mr. Frost—and he is one of your first politicians—told my friend that he 'would send two mopsticks to Parliament,' if they could only keep to his side in a division. And another said he 'would vote for hog, dog, or devil,' if he were only paid. So, really, gentlemen, I think there must have been some stronger reason."

"Arrah, my friends," said Cholmeley, "I see you are too knowing. We all say at elections in Ireland, 'As well tickle a milestone as blarney the priest;' they are uncommon hands. No, no, Mr. Austin, you're right there,—quite entirely. That was not the worst of the Captain. But we found out that he was the lowest possible blackguard; that no gentleman could put up with such company: for, if you believe me—the scamp!—no sooner did they talk about business than he hadn't more shame than to confess that he hadn't a shilling in his pocket."

I have already said, "'tis not my talent to conceal my thought." I should never have done for a doctor, said Seymour: for, any one could read my opinion in my looks; and Ellen said that I did look so very depreciating at the deputation; and as to the series of short questions I put them, it was ten times more provoking to people to be made ashamed of their errand than if I had said "No," in the most positive manner.

The end of all this was, that I sent them away rather damped than denied, but not without exhibiting some signs of deep displeasure. "As a clergyman—a Protestant clergyman," said Horton, "I was bound to assist in putting down Maynooth, Popery, and Jesuitism, more especially in these Puseyite days." Lady Newcome and party soon joined in the same cry.—Indeed, Maynooth is quite an armoury to some people, from which to pelt and batter unhappy parsons at every election.

I am not holding myself up as a pattern,—too often, I fear, as a caution—to others. I am not justifying sardonic looks, or the way Ellen tells me I have of listening, like a Commissioner in Lunacy, with pity for the delusions of the unhappy speaker. Indeed, I am sorely afraid that my manner of doing things has caused full half the outcry against me. But Uncle Ben's talkativeness did the rest; for Uncle never could keep a secret, if in the form of a joke. He soon quoted my unguarded remarks that Manton "Politics" were simply "Knavish tricks;" also, that "the independent voters who came from the hustings looked like a general gaol delivery, with just time to get drunk."

And now it was Sunday—the poll to commence on the Wednesday following—and it was partly conjectured and partly

rumoured that the Rector was to give them an election-sermon that day.

Accordingly, the church was crowded, and great was the curiosity to hear what I could have to say on the subject.

I chose for my text, "It needs must be that offences come; but woe be unto that man by whom they come." I explained in its application that "it needs must be"—experience compelled us to expect—that the poor would be tempted by a bribe, at the risk of having to swear that they had none; that bad custom formed no excuse, but if the rich could deliberately suborn the ignorant to meditate perjury, this was a heinous sin in the sight of God. What! could we believe that any man in the position of a magistrate, or a master of many servants, could stoop to things so abject and so mean? Where was that truth and stainless honour on which men prided themselves, and would even venture their lives to defend, if subornation to perjury did not shock their consciences? It mattered not how the lie was told, whether by the lips of the rich man, or by his tampering with the honesty of the poor. Indeed the latter was the worse of the two. I exhorted them to remember the fate of Ananias and Sapphira, struck dead with the lie on their lips. Was it so very unlikely that, amidst the riot and the drunkenness which attended ill-gotten gold, some one should not outlive the day of his wicked deed? and what if it appeared that this deed had been instigated by one who should set an example of upright conduct?

Such was an outline of my sermon. Every intending briber clearly saw that he stood before me, if he dared to bribe, first of all as a false-hearted and dishonoured man, and also as one who compromised his boasted county position, and went hand-in-hand with his own servant in acting or conniving at a lie.

When the common people are angry, they call names. The higher classes do the same in the form of vexatious imputations. So Bulkeley openly said mine was a doctrine of works,—sheer Deism, and nothing better. Horton's party talked of my preaching politics, forgetting Lord Eldon's admirable distinction, that "it is one thing to make religion political; another thing to make politics Christian."

The excitement at Elkerton was very great at this time. Eyes, long heavy, had begun to sparkle,—thoughts, thick as treacle, had begun to flow. At any other sermon, Mr. Horton and party would have been deaf and absent indeed; but now they could not help listening, and well they knew that every poor man listened, too. I did not deal in generals; I drew two pictures:

one, of the poor man, happy in the gold his hand had never grasped before, earned only by turning into one booth instead of another. Then, something happened to make him pause: the Bible was put into his hand. Yes, the Bible! The poor man is taken by surprise, and thinks, What means this? But almost before he can reflect, some words are hurried over by the clerk, he kisses the book, and is hurried away in the crowd, to make way for others; and he asks himself, "What have I done?" "Done! You have called on the Almighty to bear witness to a lie; grasping that money in one hand, you have taken the Bible with the other, and have sworn you had not a farthing for your vote!"

This I said very slowly and solemnly, and in quite an everyday and conversational tone of voice, almost acting the scene; and then making a long pause, I saw several look at each other as if they never thought of that before.

I therefore went on to say that I was well aware that the poor man might never think of this; but, I said, the man who tenders the bribe knows it well, and what must you think of the man set in authority over you—one of your betters, so called, one great in this world, to whom you look up for an example—if he actually asks you nominally to sell your vote, but really to be ready to swear to a lie on demand?

Nothing is so sure to make a man unpopular as when he spoils fun, mars merriment, or in any other way acts as a damper on the sanguine spirits of a party. "The County" felt in an awkward dilemma. They might as well do the thing that was right, for I had effectually taken the relish out of the course that was wrong.

Uncle Ben said mine was an uncomfortable sort of sermon; "besides," he said, "bribery is quite a British institution." "Well," I replied, "so is sin. Sin is quite a British institution, too. It is a world-wide institution of one kind; but then the Gospel is, happily, a British institution of another kind. And if the clergy, about the time of every election, would stand forth with the fearless energy of the prophets of old, and call truth and falsehood by the plainest Bible names, and warn the poor man not to sell his soul to the rich, and warn the rich man not to taint with his own meanness the conscience of the poor; if, disentangling all the mazes of sophistry, every pulpit rang with the solemn caution and stirring words, 'I will reprove thee, and set before thee the things that thou hast done,' why then, this periodical lesson in law-breaking—this perjury by proxy on the part of

members — this mean compromise of all noble and manly feelings amongst men in a station to be examples of all that is gentlemanly and chivalrous — aye, and this virtual confession of the rich man to the poor, 'Give us only the temptation, and we can be as mean and grovelling as yourselves' — this would all be abandoned in disgust by many a man who now thinks only of buying what the rustic is too ignorant to exercise or understand."

My friends may think I am too emphatic, and, indeed, harsh and severe. They must wait till they hear the sequel. No one who has not had my painful experience can conceive how a town is demoralized, how many a heart-wound bleeds afresh, how angry spirits, long soothed and quiet, are wrought once more to frenzy, and that long after the riot and the drunkenness has passed away. No one but the clergyman can tell how long all lessons of peace, charity, and holiness, are set aside and forgotten clean out of mind, all through the malice and the strife that is fomented by an election in a small borough town.

"I have lived among this electioneering forty years," said a good woman I was attending on her deathbed, "and I have seen all the wickedness that comes of it; and I really do believe, *that, all along of this electioneering, hundreds have gone to —— out of Manton, who would not otherwise.*"

If bribery is to be stopped, it may most readily be done by the clergy operating on public opinion. If once this opinion is formed, and the House of Commons is in earnest, the days of bribery are numbered; but, as to a Court which is like a committee of poachers trying breaches of the game laws, or a committee of cooks hearing evidence against perquisites, the very name of such an appeal is a denial of justice.

In all that I said, perjury, or suborning to perjury, was the point. Where was the use of talking about conscience in voting, when Silly Billy was as competent to vote as half the freemen of Manton? But this imputation of perjury gave great offence. "The County" said, I was giving a meaning to a mere form that had no meaning in itself, and that there was no violation of conscience in the matter; and who was Mr. Austin, that he should interfere to prevent the rightful influence of property in electing any representative as they pleased?

Evidently all this would make any clergyman unpopular enough; but the most vexatious thing of all was that, defend themselves as they would, a horrible catastrophe was to follow, as if to cut the very ground from under them. Besides, the bribes were so given as to contemplate perjury — put in teapots, or

given to mothers or sisters in trust: indeed, everything was done to prepare the way for an artful lie in case of need.

Can any man conceive without horror the effect of such a system periodically throughout the length and breadth of England? The question bears not more on the House of Commons than the House of Correction.

As to the election, it will suffice to say that a young man with more money than wit, and whose speech evinced the grossest ignorance of politics, made a private bargain with a certain Manton agent to be one member, while the said agent proved to be the other; for, this agent actually stood against his principal, with whose money he had fed the hungry freemen till the poor animals were more obedient to him as the keeper than to their old member, as the Mr. Wombwell of this strange menagerie. This proceeding was connived at by Mr. Horton and his party, or the said agent would never have dared to offer himself as a candidate.

But soon the rejected candidate petitioned against the return; and one of his chief witnesses was old Isaac Stubbs, who admitted that he had received six pounds for his vote; and on the strength of his evidence he was subpœnaed before the Committee of the House of Commons.

But Isaac Stubbs was not allowed to remain in the same honest state of mind. Mr. Horton had a nephew named Mr. Hole, one of the solicitors on the same side. Mr. Hole paid Isaac a visit; what special instructions he gave we may easily guess, for Isaac swore positively in committee he never received a penny for his vote! Still other witnesses, who would not be so easily tampered with, proved the case, and the members were turned out.

But the exposure did not end here. A commission was soon after sent down to Manton to probe the corruption of this notable borough, and one of the party paid another visit to Isaac Stubbs, and Isaac heard, to his dismay, that the game was all up; that all the bribes must be scheduled; and that he, after swearing one way at their bidding in London, must now retract, and swear the contrary at Manton.

Isaac Stubbs had now his eyes opened at once to his sin and his shame. What fiend ever turned more cruelly to mock the pitiful dupe of his heartless villainy?—"What!" said Isaac, "in our own town-hall, before all the people who know me, am I to stand up and confess that, just to please you, who now throw me over, I have been at once such a liar and such a fool as to swear what I knew to be false?"

Isaac was poor, old, and ignorant, deserving no less pity than

blame. How should any poor man have much reverence for truth and honesty, accustomed as Isaac was, to see both these virtues suspended and ignored with the full acquiescence of the "gentry," as often as a member was wanted for Manton?

Isaac was my parishioner, and lived near the quarries, where he constantly worked. His painful position was soon brought to my knowledge; and next morning I was on my way to his cottage, when I met our Doctor, and observed that his cravat was all sprinkled with blood. He reined up his horse to speak to me, and said,—

"Your perjury sermon, Mr. Austin, has had a most awful confirmation at last."

"Why, what can be the matter?"

"Isaac Stubbs has cut his throat!"

It soon appeared that, distracted with fear of shame as well as punishment, the old man had inflicted on himself a dangerous wound with his razor; but the wound was sewn up, and hopes were entertained of his recovery.

But there were others, as well as old Isaac Stubbs, who felt the Manton Commission, sitting day after day as it did for six weeks, to be a scrutiny most fearful to think of. The darkest deeds must now be spoken in the plainest words, and that in the ears of the other party now itching for the fullest discovery.

A bitter pill, indeed, was that examination, which, first of all, traced 2000*l.* as paid by the one M.P. and received by the other, to be made secure of the borough of Manton. Then the agents, who had the handling of the said 2000*l.*, being called on, had much reason to dread an exact account.

Add to this, some well-to-do tradesmen, who would fain have been thought above practices so little and so low as to sell the very vote which was the basis of their much-vaunted British privilege, caught instant alarm at the news that their names would be published, and appear on a schedule as receivers of part of the sum in question!

Oh! what a sight there was to see when the Commission was sitting in the Town-hall of Manton! Here was the one party submitted to the torturing questions of the three Inquisitors, while the other party, sharpened by envy, malice, and all uncharitableness, were ingeniously suggesting where to probe for a tender part.

My perjury sermon was doomed to find on this occasion one sad confirmation more.

Mr. Edward Stall was a bookseller; so, a gentleman tradesman

and a man of position: also, inasmuch as he was a member of New Street Chapel, and a Primitive Methodist, the effect of his name on the list of Briberees was appalling indeed, and very justly brought the whole conventicle about his ears. Mr. Edward Stall denied the fact. Accordingly he was ordered by the congregation to present himself before the Commissioners, and to give a sworn denial in open court.

Little did Mr. Edward Stall imagine how hard a thing it is to tell one lie—and one lie only—with the least semblance of truth, in the face of three eminent counsel.

Mr. Serjeant Heath, the chief Inquisitor, was a man of Old Bailey experience—the most dangerous that a false witness could possibly encounter. The examination, which was one of the most intensely interesting, though painful kind, was as follows:—

Mr. Heath—Well, Mr. Stall, you come here to swear you never did receive any money for your vote at the last election. Is it so?

Stall—Yes, sir. I do swear it.

Mr. Heath—Well; but that is not much like one of the Stall family, to vote for nothing: is it, Mr. Stall? About six Stalls were paid: why not you?

Stall—I trust, sir, I shall show that I am not like one of the family in this particular. No, sir; I am too respectable a man to do such a thing.

Mr. Heath—But, first of all, this schedule before me contains an item of six pounds, paid to Edward Stall. How is that? Did you not have any money at all?

Stall—Those six pounds I received for my brother, John Stall, and not for myself.

Mr. Heath—But I have also the fact of six pounds having been paid separately to John Stall. Now, since six pounds was the regular price of the votes, how came John to be entitled to twelve pounds?

Mr. Stall now turned pale, and seemed uneasy; the more so as one or two bystanders gave a loud a-hem; as much as to say, "That, my friend, is a poser!" However, he stammered out, "He could not explain; but so it was. Perhaps all did not receive the same."

Mr. Heath—"Did not receive the same," you say. But twelve is just the double of six—the exact sum that would pay for your vote and John's too. Surely this is a curious coincidence?

Here we had more *a-hems!* and other signs of bitter triumph

from the one party, and disgust and dismay from the other. Two or three persons from the New Street Chapel, with starch enough in their faces but none in their cravats, showed strong symptoms of uneasiness.

These men honestly boasted that none of their people were in the Bribery schedule but Mr. Stall; and here—were it not that my love of orthodoxy is expected to be stronger than my love of truth,—I should be less afraid to confess that there was hardly an instance of a briberee among all the Dissenters of Manton.

These observations I had time to make, because there was a pause while the three Commissioners whispered together, and Mr. Edward Stall, perhaps, was bitterly rueing his chapel membership, and the severity of that Primitive discipline which Church people think perfectly fair enough in the Chapel, but which Chapel people would decry as tyranny in the Church.

At length the examination was continued thus:—

Mr. Heath—Now, Mr. Stall, before we proceed further, we would caution you to reflect on what you are saying. The question is, Was not that second sum of six pounds paid you for your own vote, and not at all for your brother's?—Now think, before you answer.

This was said slowly and emphatically. Mr. Stall did take a few moments, as desired. "Truth sits upon the lips," says Addison, "and is ever ready to come forth." We speak truth without an effort, but every lie requires some thought. Mr. Stall, no doubt, felt the power of nature prompting Yes; but the powers of sin were prompting No. His place, position, pride, and book-trade, and all New Street Chapel, urged him on. I felt overpowered by the solemnity of this appeal, and melted by the sympathy of the Commissioner, and felt that the truth must come now. But no. Mr. Stall's mouth worked and quivered painfully—and Barristers look at the mouth, as a surer index than the eyes, if they suspect a lie—but, at last he rushed deeper into the pit, and did swear, with all the desperate emphasis he could command, that the money was not for himself!

Mr. Heath now paused again, and then, as if fired with indignation, and setting himself in earnest to the task before him, said,—

"Then you shall tell us all about it—we will go step by step—if false, the sin be on your own head" (this I heard him say aside: for, I was sitting near him on the bench). "First of all, you, Mr. Stall, received twelve pounds in Colton's shop?"

Stall—I did.

Mr. Heath—You received, it appears, two of the many little parcels of six sovereigns each, made up ready in the shop of the last witness, Colton?

Stall—I did.

Mr. Heath—What did you do with it first?

Stall—I took it home.

Mr. Heath—Then, if you received it for your brother, have you sent it to your brother?—He is in London, I believe?

Stall—I did send it.

Mr. Heath—At what date did you send it to your brother in London?

Stall—The very same day.

Mr. Heath—The same day? Well, that was the 15th February: this date will assist us. Then, how did you send it—by banker's order, post-office order, or how?

Every one present saw the drift of this question—money remitted leaves a trace behind.

Mr. Stall was now deeper and deeper in the maze—every ear was intent upon the next answer—discovery seemed inevitable—but, he saw such modes of sending would leave a trace if true: so he stammered out: "I sent it in a parcel, by the coach."

Mr. Heath (*quickly*)—Sent what?

Stall—The twelve sovereigns.

Mr. Heath—What sort of parcel?

Stall (*hesitating*)—A brown-paper parcel.

Mr. Heath—Am I positively—to understand—that you put twelve sovereigns into a brown-paper parcel? (Suppressed cries of "Oh! oh!" "A likely joke, indeed!")

Stall (*nervously*)—I did.

Mr. Heath—Did any shopman see you make up this most extraordinary parcel?

Stall—I don't know.

Mr. Heath—Not know! Why, he would never have forgotten such a thing; and it would help you wonderfully at the present moment if he did.—But, who took the parcel to the coach-office?

Stall—I took it myself.

Mr. Heath—What! still no evidence!—Then, did you book it?

Stall—No, I did not. (Cries of "Oh!")

Mr. Heath—How many years have you been in business, Mr. Stall?

Stall—Twelve years, on my own account.

Mr. Heath—Then you made some entry or memorandum of the parcel?

Stall—No, sir.

Mr. Heath—Any entry in your book of parcels?

Stall—No, sir.

Hereupon there was another pause, and great sensation in court. "He might just as well confess it at once," was remarked quite near, and audibly enough for Mr. Stall to hear.

Then the Commissioners stopped, and spoke together in whispers.

At length Mr. Serjeant Heath, in solemn tone, thus addressed this gentleman-tradesman—this respectable man—this member of New Street Chapel—with several deacons as supporters, now horrified at the way in which their party was disgraced,—

"Mr. Stall, I am sorry to say that this story is one which no one in this court can for one moment believe. We shall send for your brother, and I caution you not to communicate with him till he appears in that witness-box."

Meanwhile, the wretched creature shifted from one foot to the other, and wriggled and trembled, and was pitiful to behold; for, by this time, there was not one of the many eyes that were all fixed as if to pierce him, in which he could not read incredulity, pity, or contempt.

Mr. Stall hung down his head, rushed desperately through the crowd, and went home. A friend of mine was lodging in his house, and all that night, said he, Stall was in a state of delirium!—The minister of his chapel was sent for, and very wisely advised him to "amend his evidence" before his brother came.

Next day Stall appeared again in the witness-box, to "amend his evidence;" that is, to put it all in the plainest words, and confess he had been bribed. A painful scene ensued—no excuse, no prevarication would avail. The serjeant kept him writhing under the torture of his inquisition till he had made a plain denial of all his former evidence.

Indignation gave way to pity for the time—the guilty man had punishment enough. The low state of Manton morals may be judged from this,—that Edward Stall still kept his shop in the same town.

Some weeks passed away, and old Isaac Stubbs seemed likely to recover. "It was a shocking bad accident," said his wife, as I entered his house; but Isaac, for some time, would do nothing but groan and sigh heavily. At last he told me, that all he could say was, he "was set on by *the gentlemen!* and they ought to

know what was right; and he was put up on purpose to deny the bribe, and so he did deny it; and, but for *the gentlemen!* he should never have done it."

I told him the Commissioners knew how much he had suffered. He was now sufficiently well, and must go and plainly declare the money received, and say he was sorry he had been so wicked as to depose otherwise, and I believed they would, in pity, soon send him away.

Isaac Stubbs took my advice.

No one who was present will ever forget the scene. There stood the worn-out quarryman of seventy years of age, with his few grey locks and his bloodless features, almost the same colour as the cloth that yet bound his wounded throat. The three Commissioners were much affected at the sight; they knew what he had come to testify; and mercifully helped him out with his tale of sin and shame, and told him to go back home.

"Old Isaac is very bad again, sir," said Martha, next morning: "I think you would like to see him."

Old Isaac was indeed very bad. He returned from the court out of heart and out of spirits, complained of being very thirsty and very weak, and soon went to bed. From that bed he never rose. The shock was too much for the old man's strength, and, in three days, he was no more!

CHAPTER XVIII.

MR. HORLEY DIES — HOW THE WIDOW HORLEY FOUND THAT HER VERY CHARMING PREACHER WAS BY NO MEANS CHARMING IN PRACTICE — AND HOW LADIES SHOULD BEWARE OF CERTAIN GENTLEMEN IN BLACK.

I MUST now ask the reader to allow me to pass over all the detail of express messages, hurrying Ellen on two occasions as to her father's deathbed, before finally, when dissolution was least expected, he expired in the night.

Some few invalids are bound to the world without by ties of love, and many more by hopes and expectations. Mr. Horley had no such tie: no one owed him any love — no one looked for any money. Shut up in one close room, he was no sooner out of sight than out of mind. He had long been dead to all his neighbours, and now his actual demise and funeral seemed only a foregone conclusion; for, some persons almost thought that they had heard of it before.

The impression made on Ellen was that of a deep and abiding melancholy. With her, religion was a reality. She had ever contemplated her dear mother as among the blessed, and was much excited as well as affected by a discourse she once heard about "just men made perfect" in heaven, and about a church invisible — part sojourning here on earth, and part gone before as citizens of "the Jerusalem which is above." Little Alice once said, in conversing about a picture of angels coming for the departing Christian, "Then, when you die, your good mamma will want to be one of those angels who are to come after you." No wonder, therefore, such a daughter could only dwell with painful feelings on the death of such a father.

At the death of Mr. Horley, the Bowdon estate was his nephew's. Ellen received 500*l.* a-year, charged on the Winslow property in Northumberland; but Mrs. Horley, besides furniture

and ready money, took 800*l.* a-year for life from the rents of certain estates in Ireland.

Here, then, was 800*l.* a-year for some lucky man, to be had for asking; the only drawback being that the gentleman must take, not only the money, but the Widow Horley too.

In some countries widows are buried alive; and even in England, many a lady, after what is called "a happy release," has complained of the same hard custom; and so it happened to Mrs. Horley: and, after enduring a kind of mural interment for twelve months, she seemed quite to come to life again, and like a garden in spring, the widow was soon clear of her weeds, and we may say almost in the words of Shakspeare, that, in imagination at least,

> "The winter of her discontent,
> Became glorious summer in"—some choice young man.

Indeed, she lost no time in emerging in a butterfly state, to the no small amusement of that part of the world who care only to get a laugh out of everything.

Cullen Court was the habitation which now received the widow's goods and chattels. It was a genteel, old-fashioned house, about half-way between Bowdon and Elkerton. Every one knew she would marry again: because every one knew she was a "wifish woman," and the first match she counted as nothing.

A marriage of convenience is always disappointing. Still, who is there but believes that bliss is somewhere to be found? Who but believes two tender hearts in harmonious unison may enjoy this delicious tumult of the soul?—We must, therefore, not be severe on Mrs. Horley if she did make such an error as to forget that love is more of a cold collation than of "the feast of reason and the flow of soul," at the sober age of half-a-hundred years.

Mrs. Horley had many a suitor. I do not say she had many an offer. She would not let it come to an offer: but when each thought, "Good, easy man, his greatness was a-ripening," she "nipped his root."

Then how do I know that they were suitors at all?

Why, did I not see Bulkeley's brother—a man who never would remain "at that slow place, Elkerton," above a day or two before—always happening to be just by the gate of Cullen Court? Did not Lady Newcome's cousin—who, circuit after circuit, had followed the law without overtaking it—find out that he once

knew Mrs. Horley's sister, besides one of her most intimate friends, when he was at College? Did not I meet, one snowy day, outside of the Manton coach, a scapegrace kinsman of the house of Horton—"the poor relation," "the family bore," "the everlasting visitor" of somebody—and did not things implied by his sifting questions, when dove-tailed on to Ellen's well-known facts, prove to demonstration that he had been actually sent for by the Hortons, and planted upon the Widow Horley? And, did I not see a kind of snappishness in the Newcomes, Bulkeleys, and Hortons, all alike, when any one suggested that the Rev. A. Shark would go in and win after all?

This "nice young man," the Rev. A. Shark, was a popul*ace* preacher at the town of Manton. Certainly, many good men have been popular; still, popular preachers are not always good.

"No wonder you are the more popular of the two," said the Rev. D—— G—— to another Mr. Shark, "for you lead down, but I up; you go with the foul stream of evil passions, but I make head against it."

A pulpit to a swindler—and Mr. Shark, I may as well say at once, was a swindler—is vantage-ground indeed. A pulpit ensures credit with every tradesman; a pulpit promises an open-hearted reception with every Christian family; and this hearty, and this confiding, and this genial hospitality—I say it most gratefully, most thankfully—is to the clergy more than gold. For, a clergyman who is an honest man and a gentleman has social advantages higher, for the most part, because purer, than the richest layman within miles around.

This hospitality, so kind and flattering to the clergy, the Rev. A. Shark was the very man to abuse, and even to make merchandise of it; and bishops who ordain, as also rectors who accredit the sharks of the Church, would do well to consider that, by forfeiting the confidence of the laity, they virtually render the clergy as poor in honour as they undoubtedly are poor in purse.

The Rev. A. Shark never had any University education.

The best practical guarantee that a man has some good in him is, when his own parents have thought him worth educating at the cost of 1500*l.* to 2000*l.* For, this is too large a venture to be commonly made, for the small returns of the Church, on any but a promising youth. There are scattered about England at the present time above 17,000 clergymen, with every eye to detect and every newspaper to publish slips almost microscopical, if not conventional, in a layman. How then does it happen that

the proportion of clerical misdoings is so small?—only because the clergy are selected from the safest class.

Literates, on the contrary, are selected chiefly from the most unsafe class of the whole community, namely, from a kind of shabby-genteel class, who have either been bred to no profession or have succeeded in none.

A notable swindler once said he could afford to give 10,000*l.* down, if he could only be enabled to start with a character. Mr. Shark invested barely 100*l.* in this useful commodity. He found out a certain so-called college, built as a kind of charitable speculation for the training of literates, with full confidence that Bishops would ordain as fast as this college should grant its certificate. This speculation did not answer; so, the lower the funds the less particular they could afford to be, till both the standard and the company became low indeed.

One day a painter, a shoemaker, and also a Dissenter who had been expelled by his own party as a black sheep, presented themselves before a neighbouring bishop to make, as a matter of course, arrangements for holy orders. His lordship was a plain kind of man, who thought that the "poor in spirit" was one thing, but the poor in purse another; and he happened to think that greater vulgarity was no kind of guarantee of greater piety: so he saw the imposition at a glance, and sent the impudent trio back to their college.

Still, Mr. Shark among others, finding that some bishops, like other good men, were apt to hope all things, and to believe all things, unhappily crept into the ministry, and took his place in society with the same credentials on the part of the Church, and the same confidence on the part of the people, as if he were chosen from the best-educated and the best-conducted of English gentlemen.—I say, the *best;* for University men are the best. Indeed, *however* inferior the clergy may be to our wishes, I will defy any system, on the average, to select any better than that system which selects exclusively from the members of our Universities.

But, though I say the Rev. A. Shark was a literate, let me add, I have known one or two excellent pastors who were literates. Still, the system is a premium for adventurers. It is from one excellent man, as a literate, that I have received much information on this very subject; and I could name one Bishop who complained that he found men, whom he had chosen for their humble character, *inferior* especially *in piety.* I could name one Canon, who said, "I have been the cause of ordaining four

literates, and I bequeath my experience as a warning to my brethren."

The Rev. A. Shark had been in a solicitor's office, and thence expelled for malpractices; but having a good voice, a fair address, and a very low estimate of the sense of other people, with a degree of assurance near akin to impudence, with no taste to cry Hold! to the nonsense of his tongue, it followed that he was the very man for the popular preacher. Add to this, Mr. Shark was a pestilent fellow. His Rector, Mr. Raymond, like other rectors, had one party against him; and when Mr. Shark added his voice to their cause, and his blast to their animosities, the place was so divided that they "tore their passions to rags—to very tatters."

The two factions—the Sharkites and the Raymondites—divided all Manton; and it is wonderful what party spirit will do in a country town. The Sharkites were the stronger, and in their judgment Mr. Shark, as part and parcel of themselves, "could do no wrong." Hence, all his many slips—all those little holes that let in so much light upon the character—were covered or explained away. The more the one side reflected on his shaky credit, the more the other trusted him with goods; and so, for a time, his greatest dupes became his strongest advocates.

But this financial error was one to correct itself. Christmas came, and the "compliments of the season" not being duly returned, the Sharkites felt that they were done. There is a certain "Trade Protection Society," which publishes in a circular the names of gentlemen who left their last place without the formality of paying their bills. And these circulars, month after month, made anxious inquiries after the Rev. A. Shark, and though the Sharkite faction pretended it was all ill-nature and jealousy, still they felt all the time that more credit would not do. When, therefore, it was rumoured that Mrs. Horley was among Mr. Shark's Sunday admirers, and that he took many a walk to Cullen Court, "then all was hushed"—his dupes began to breathe again, they would not harass him, nor hurt his credit, for the world—in short, they would willingly have subscribed and bought him a *trousseau*, rather than injure the poor young man's prospects for life with the rich lady of Cullen Court.

By this time, a great deal was known about the Rev. A. Shark. The banker had seen his name to a bill, and the solicitors had had writs to serve. But these men habitually keep their own counsel; besides, Mr. Shark counted as Whig, and since the Rector was Conservative, Manton made the most of this clerical partizan, and to say one word against him was to have the whole

Whig party like a hornet's nest about your ears. Under all these several penalties were the men of Manton bound over to keep the peace, and the Widow Horley was doomed to be blind till too late.

The Rev. A. Shark's real character, however, was soon known to me. Mr. Seymour — and doctors know everything — whispered that the peculiar blush his face betrayed was not pure modesty; also, that Tom Edderley and Charles Williams, whose grog and cigars figured conspicuously at the tap of the King's Arms, boasted that one day they had reduced their Parson to a moist condition, and then drew forth the secret on which, "by strong doctrines" — "things bold, staring, and startling" — Mr. Shark, as he let out, made an impression on his deluded flock while he laughed at them in his sleeve! — All this information was soon confirmed by the private inquiries of John Willis, uncle's managing clerk : so Ellen and I talked the matter over, and resolved, as we thought, at once to put an end to the match, as soon as we were satisfied that Mrs. Horley had serious thoughts of the gentleman.

We were very soon satisfied on this point. Mrs. Horley was captivated by his manners — the Church seemed to vouch for his character — his own boasted expectations were cheering in the extreme — and — since widows have a very business-like way of dispensing with the slow formalities of more youthful admiration — the engagement was announced as a settled thing, before we thought it time even to say, "Be cautious."

The bearer of bad news "has but a losing office," and so we found to our cost. Everything I said the lady parried — she would explain away anything. She knew he had enemies, and no wonder: the clergy were jealous of his preaching, and one-half the laity were angry at his politics: but then the other half, she said most exultingly, cried him up to the skies.

Thus did the lady blunt the point of every shaft in my quiver; but I am old enough now to know that — when once a lady has set her heart upon a man — when once she has been "the talk," and drank in the honeyed words from the lips of her friends, and read disappointment in the hearts of her rivals — both pride and passion conspire to close her ears and blind her eyes to all that should reveal her perilous position. She seems to be defending her lover, but she is really defending herself.

Our efforts, it is true, were all in vain. Still, neither Ellen nor I could be easily silenced on such a subject. As to Ellen, her feelings as to married life were of the deepest and the most sacred kind. The idea of a cruel tie of the living to the dead — of one

who had a heart to one who had no heart at all—of a lady who, with all her faults of tongue and temper, was a true and honourable woman, to a shameless, drunken swindler — this seemed to Ellen horrible indeed. Uncle Ben—though he did all he could to open the silly woman's eyes—might laugh as he pleased, but to Ellen it was no laughing matter. Besides, the care with which Mrs. Horley nursed Ellen's father—and yet more, the love she had vented, gushing and ardent upon the children—all this made Ellen persevere.

For myself, I had a motive of another kind. It was the Church that gave the creature his *status;* it was reverence for the Church that made the lady dispense with all inquiry: in short, it was that honourable confidence which has for years been reposed in the clergy, which now threatened to be this lady's ruin.

But all our endeavours were in vain—nay, they did her far more harm than good. Uncle Ben was equally unfortunate; he made her angry with the whole fraternity of the law, and the result was that she married without any settlement: and—wholly without protection—surrendered herself and estate to the tender mercies of, positively, the most unqualified reprobate I ever knew in my life.

The Rev. A. Shark pretended that he, forsooth, was making a settlement! but no settlement was forthcoming by the "happy day."

And so the Rev. A. Shark and the Widow Horley became man and wife. Many a creditor rubbed his hands, and chuckled at having the security of Cullen Court for his bill; "and," said John Willis, "the talk that went on in our bar-room that night about the hands they would lay to the poor lady's property, was a cruel shame for any decent man to think of."

We heard from uncle what was going on in Manton. So, when we paid our first visit, Ellen looked cold as marble at the man, and we both saw that the bride was very ill at ease.

Painful—beyond all imagination painful—must it be to find a very viper in your bosom, and that one you have sworn to love and to cherish, to honour and to obey, is hateful as a liar, and to be spurned as a mean, and abject, and a loathsome thing!

This our friend James expressed in his own strong way. "The very salt is out of the man—he has barely soul enough to keep him from putrefaction: for, a man without truth is no more good than so many stone of carrion."

One year passed before Mrs. Shark's proud soul yielded to its

sorrow, and before, indeed, she could write to say, "Help me, I am ruined — I confess that I would not believe your warning — I despised your friendly counsel. But now it is all too true. Oh! what — what have I done!" Still, long before this, we saw the usual signs of silent, soul-corroding care — yes, care, that with floods of pent-up tears moistens the pillow in the watches of the night — care that, with cankerous tooth, eats furrows in the face, or fixing the eye on vacancy, "whispers the o'er-fraught heart and bids it break."

First, we observed that she was silent, absent, and abstracted. Then, she seemed to avoid society: for, she had known this world long enough to feel that conjugal troubles, like the gout, though very painful, draw more smiles than sympathy. Next, after eight months, we heard that "the happy couple" intended to travel: and no sooner did we hear this than they were gone! One month more had hardly passed away before it was advertised that a peremptory sale was ordered of all the effects at Cullen Court! The truth was, that this shocking reprobate wanted ready money. And, so unqualified were the instructions to sell to the day, that the sacrifice that was made of the property was on every tongue.

Our next letter was from London. Mr. Shark, it informed us, had gone to Ireland to see to the estates, and Mrs. Shark was alone in South Molton Street.

The professional reader, who knows how far the rights of the wife may be compromised by the wrongs of the husband, will be prepared to hear that the Rev. A. Shark never wrote and never returned; also, that the Irish rents were no more paid to the lady; and that, in short, beyond a little money in her purse, the anniversary of the marriage day found her without a penny in the world!

Nothing is more easy to calculate than a rake's progress. Sin, like storms, has its law: and, half the town of Manton had calculated the total eclipse of Mrs. Shark before I could announce that it had really happened. "Our queer Parson and his widow," had been the talk of the King's Arms bar-room many a jovial night: and since the said bar-room formed a kind of country-town club, where John Willis drank his gin and water by the side of the aristocratical James Horton or Tom Elmore, as they smoked a cigar, news circulated very fast between town and country — all that part of the neighbourhood had a story worth telling in a very short time.

Ellen was shocked at the heartless way in which she was questioned as to the truth of the report. She was, herself, all

pity for the poor lady—she could speak feelingly of the horrors of poverty, and was positively distracted with indignation at "such a robber," with heartfelt sorrow for his unhappy victim. Mrs. Shark's case was really pitiful. In the History of the French Revolution we read that a sudden fall from affluence to penury often destroyed the reason, paralysed all power of action, and brought relief in death. And, rather than see another lady friend in such an extremity of woe, I would truly say, with David, let her fall into the hands of God and not into the hands of man.

In Mrs. Shark's case, week after week, the landlady's handful of bills—of course everything an extra, from plate and linen, to the contents of the cruet-stand—drained her little store, and made that little less; till at last, lonely, friendless, and broken down in heart and spirits, she made a full confession and sought counsel in that landlady, and asked how a temporary loan could possibly be raised.

The value of money and all the mysteries of good security were then explained, and amidst all her bewilderment—this she told me with sighs of shame some time after—she let the landlady go for one Mrs. Flackman in Dean Street, Soho, who so often advertises "the highest price for a lady's wardrobe, and liberal accommodation on jewellery and plate."

"I remember," said Mrs. Shark, "I was very nervous at the idea of dealing with a money-lender, and I felt as, I should suppose, I should feel at an execution in my house.

"I expected one of the race of Mrs. Grindham—I imagined creatures like the wreckers, and birds of ill-omen and of prey. But, instead of the felonious aspect of some female receiver of stolen goods—such was, indeed, my prevailing idea—a middle-aged woman, with a strong Jewish cast of features, entered the room—one of pleasing manners, and one evidently accustomed to treat with persons in my position in life.

"As I was beginning," said Mrs. Shark, "to make some excuse, and to explain my positively having occasion to propose such a thing as pawning my valuables, the woman said, 'Nothing is more customary, madam—advancing money and accommodating, we call it; that is all, ma'am. But, the very first people—and it is only the first people that I wait on, my husband and our young woman go to distressed tradespeople and that sort of folk—the very first people want me very often. 'Why,' said my Lady ——; but I never mention names—you may trust me, madam—'what is one to do for a fifty-pound note, when an accident happens? If I were to ask one of all those hundreds

that come to my parties for the loan of a check, they would be ready to sink into the ground before me. So, take these cases of jewellery, lend me some money at interest, and I am under no obligation to any one.' "

Such things have been said to me very often: and, any one as fond as I am of studying the manners and customs of all classes of my fellow-creatures, must be well aware that great people must sometimes condescend to little ways. I say "sometimes" only—of course, it is not often; but, the practice is more common than prudent persons would readily suppose.

Nothing will give a more striking picture of Mrs. Shark's fall, and the height from which she fell between affluence and want, than if I say that I eventually redeemed a set of furs, muffs, cuffs, boas, and capes, on which no less than twenty pounds—a small part of the value—had thus been advanced.

But now the twenty pounds were almost gone—post after post brought no remittance from her runaway and heartless husband. At last her letters came back endorsed with "Not known," and day by day she learnt to realize the excruciating torture of the last shillings—like the last drops of life's blood—being drained from a deserted woman in her utmost misery, when she entered the office of Messrs. Tinley and Co.—a firm which had once been casually employed by her former husband—and told them the story of her folly and her wrongs.

Mr. Tinley was a gentleman: one of those practitioners who, by the Law Society, band together to prevent low pettifoggers from bringing—and it is they who do bring—odium on an honourable profession—one which, more than any other, is entrusted, not only with untold gold, but also with family secrets and arrangements yet more precious, and whose honour is probed for its weakest point by temptations more searching and insidious than are ever known to other men.

Mr. Tinley viewed the case, not only with the deliberation of a lawyer, but with the sympathies of a man. With indirect and most delicate questions he ascertained that his lady client could have but a few pounds left. He observed she was shaken in strength and energy, and, as he afterwards said, "I pitied her the more, because she was evidently a woman of indomitable courage and strong will; but what avails an iron determination when plunging amidst the meshes of a cruel state of law?"

Mr. Tinley saw the case was one that by law might be remedied, but the uncertainty while the husband lived and could draw the rents of her estate was great indeed. He very kindly

sent his wife to call on Mrs. Shark, and invited her to spend a quiet evening, and soon after, having won her confidence, prevailed on her to write to me, and tell me all her trouble.

"A man who is out of a scrape," says Æschylus, "has no idea of the feelings of a man who is in one." If any one had asked either Ellen or me, before this happened, if we would undertake to bed and board the step-mother, we should as soon have invited water into a ship. However, as we read the letter our feelings altogether underwent a change. Ellen looked at me, and I looked at Ellen, and then we both said, Something must be done. And soon, having broken the ice of selfishness, indignation gave us one jog and pity gave us another; and then, our virtue taking courage, scorned to think of consequences. It was an awful plunge to take, but yet we took it; and I soon had written her a hearty and sympathetic invitation—for it costs no more to do the thing handsomely while you are about it—to make our house her home till something could be arranged.

As soon as we had conceived this generous resolution, we both felt a warm glow—an emotion of perfect—of the purest joy. At least, I know I did, and Ellen's melting eyes looked all benevolence too. And what is that feeling which agitates the breast with one throb of delight?—for, all must have felt what I mean, when they have done any noble action. It seems as if for that brief moment our heart-strings were attuned to the harmony of the Most High, and that this electric thrill was nature's own response and sympathy.

We did not doubt at the time—not that this influenced our invitation—that the once impulsive step-mother would be changed to a state of house-lamb. We quickly invested her with all virtues that we thought suitable to her dependent condition, and we almost imagined a subdued and best-behaved pensioner, all prim and demure, as if in the regulation cap and frock of the Elkerton Refuge for the Destitute.

We had yet to learn that people are never so particular about holding up their heads as when they are down; and that as to character, adversity brings nothing out but what was before within: indeed, it is a painful reflection, but true it is, that a poor relation or dependant is, nine times out of ten, the most wrong-headed and impracticable of all your acquaintance. It is not only what they cost you—though that is generally quite enough—but you hardly can move for fear of elbowing their touchy consequence, or treading on the toes of their tender and sensitive feelings.

However, we felt all the happier for having made the offer, which was politely accepted by return of post. I say, *politely;* but not with that warmth of gratitude and thanks, as to friends in her utmost need, we expected to read when we opened her letter. The reason was that Mrs. Shark still held her head up, and would not for one moment allow that "that infamous little reptile," as she called him, "could fail to be crushed beneath the slow but stealthy foot of avenging justice."

"The worst thing is," said Uncle Ben, "if this vagabond likes to cross the water, and live abroad, not a penny can the wife recover as long as he lives, and when she is once in your house you can never turn her out again.

"Besides, while known to be houseless and destitute, others might feel some compunction, and the remarks of the neighbours would be unpleasant, and might induce others to interfere; but the fact that 'the Austins are saddled with her,' will lay every conscience: and the more wretched they hear she makes you, the more they will chuckle—all the happier, as they will say, that it is not their house. Then, besides her board, she must have clothes—you can't let her go shabby; and as to comfort, the 'poor relation,' the 'injured woman,' the 'standing grievance,' will be dreadful. Really, it reminds me of the fishing-party who got a large conger-eel into a small boat, and were glad to jump overboard and leave the eel in possession 'of their quarters.'"

Here Uncle Ben only spoke the ideas and feelings of other comforters: but Ellen said—in a tone that made me love her all the more, and almost thank the fortune that called such virtue forth—"Never mind, Harry, we must not think of all this. We have done this as a duty: as I once heard you preach, we must have Faith and Hope, as well as Charity; and if the worst comes to the worst, a sense of duty must be our solace and our reward."

And now that the good-natured reader feels comfortable in the reflection that the landlady has not turned the poor lady into the street, we may ask his curiosity to have patience while we touch on other matters in the eventful history of the Rector of Elkerton.

CHAPTER XIX.

HOW MY CURATE IS DEMORALIZED BY TEA AND MUFFINS, AND THE EVIL INFLUENCE OF A STRICT CAP-OCRACY.

ALL this time Mr. Williams had been only partially my Curate. He also held the chaplaincy of the Manton Union, and picked up a few guineas by taking occasional duty in the absence of any Rector in the neighbourhood.

But, about six months after my father's death, Mr. Williams was appointed to hold the living of Bilkam, about three miles distant, during a sequestration. I found it necessary, therefore, to advertise for a Curate.

I had many applicants; and great was their surprise when I treated their formal testimonials as a farce, and insisted on more solid satisfaction. So I had some expense in travelling about for personal interviews.

Some of my adventures were curious. One Curate said I might put any text I pleased on the pulpit cushion and he would preach from it, without one minute's preparation! And, because I would not hear one more word he had to say, he has told the story of Mr. Austin's unreasonableness ever since.

One or two candidates were complete bookworms, and evidently knew no more of the habits of John and Betty than I do of the Hottentots.

More than one had either a stutter or a squeaking voice, or hardly any voice at all.—It has often surprised me that reading in the Cathedral has not formed part of the examination for deacon's orders.—And one came dressed like a Popish priest, and told me that he was a "good Catholic;" and when I replied that I wanted a good Protestant, and stoutly maintained that his dress, like his speech, would raise more prejudice in five minutes than he would explain away in a year, he was quite astounded at my unphilosophical view of things. At length I met with a plain,

unassuming, gentlemanlike young man, with common sense, and some idea of visiting and parish work, and arranged, after careful inquiry, that he should be my Curate. His name was the Rev. Wallis Lee; and how he profited and prospered at Elkerton must now be told, after one or two preliminary observations.

Oliver Goldsmith speaks of certain halcyon days,

"When every rood of ground maintained its man:"

if by "man" he meant a marriageable man, or "an eligible young man," those days differ most deplorably from the present. Only last year, in the best city in the west of England, an old school-fellow with three grown-up daughters—all "very amiable," all "very exemplary," in other words, all by no means good-looking—opened his heart, and lamented the fact that there was but one young fellow of whom any family man like him could take any account, within a mile of the market-place. That city is not singular in this respect. For, since the army, the Indian service, and the great metropolis, can alone give employment, the country parishes and country towns are all but drained of every young man for whom even a pretence at a dance, a dinner-party, or a pic-nic, could be ventured, with the least chance of any profitable return.

Gentility is now-a-days at agony point: for, gentility was never more expensive to keep up, and gentility never had so little to live upon. The world is too sober to want as much physic, and the world is too sensible to want as much law, as our fathers used to indulge in.

In other words, our genteel professions cannot maintain, and our country parishes cannot produce, one young gentleman (except by courtesy) to ten young ladies.

Now ladies—I mean ladies proper—do cling to the idea of gentlemen proper; and till their charms are things of the past, till despairing of a heart, they find the next best thing to be a home—till fancy has compromised with fact, and the poetry of life is "done into prose," they do shrink, contract, and recoil before the prominent attentions and advances of men of a grade below them. But how many gentlemen of their own degree of refinement do they see?—For the most part, in country places, the clergy are almost the only gentlemen they commonly see around them.

The consequence is, there is a subtle influence at work enough to spoil all the young curates in the land!

And, in so saying, I speak feelingly; for, my memory flies back to the case of *my* curate, the Rev. Wallis Lee.

My readers must be charitable in their judgment. Ministers are but men. The most you can expect of the clergy is, that they should take more to spoil them than other mortals; but more spoiling they undoubtedly have. One Cleopatra was too much for Mark Antony, and one Lady Hamilton was too much for Lord Nelson; and, indeed, in some sentimental form at least, ladies, like ambition, have proved

"The last infirmity of noble minds."

But one female charmer is nothing to a young clergyman: nearly every parish has half-a-dozen, and in a genteel town population there is a positive Cap-ocracy.

I am not speaking only of young ladies: their mothers, in the art of spoiling, are even more insidious. Dr. Johnson says of early marriages, "The daughters begin to bloom before the mother can consent to fade." But ladies never do consent to fade; a little attention is always dear to them, and a little flirtation, too: for, when it is nicely disguised, as something of the intellectual, the sensible, the quiet advice, or the pastoral character, this the Lady Newcomes love and live upon, with no less relish than their own daughters.

The Rev. Wallis Lee was bred at Winchester and New College, Oxford, and was blessed with that quiet, genial tone, and with that general fitting character, which help a man through the world so smoothly that we can almost excuse the American hyperbole of "going a-head like greased lightning."

"I am almost sorry you have appointed Mr. Lee," said Ellen.

"Why, my dear?" I replied. "You know the character we have heard of him: and then, as to his mind and manners——"

"This is the very thing I am most afraid of. There is not the least affectation in Mr. Lee; there is no conceit, or thought of self, and of his own attractions; and he is perfectly ingenuous; which is all the worse, because——"

"Because attractions you think he has, and certain people will soon make him feel he has them—eh?"

"Why, he sat quiet last Sunday evening," continued Ellen, "when we invited him home with us, seeing you were tired, and my talking was an effort—he sat quiet for an hour, with such a delicate, such an intuitive perception and sympathy with our mood and feelings. Oh, Harry, he really is a *dangerous* young

man—not one who, if he makes an impression one minute, chatters it all away the next; but one of that quiet, winning style of young men. So, I have my fears, especially as he is the wrong person to mope away in those small lodgings by himself; and, do what we will, we cannot very often entertain him here."

This consideration gave me some little uneasiness. However, I determined that I would give Mr. Lee plenty to do, and would try hard to inspire him with that energy and love of action which is the only counterpoise to effeminacy and romance.

Lee was a painstaking and conscientious kind of curate. There was no fire of enthusiasm about him, and if hard work had never been invented before his day, he had no pent-up activities that would have found out that kind of exercise for themselves. Still he would thread staircase after staircase to the bedridden, till he had finished his sick list—he would stand a fair quantity of spelling and drawling at the school, and he would faithfully deliver my prescribed number of cottage lectures at the outlying parts of the parish; and, from the way he spoke of the people he had seen, I knew he felt a lively interest in his duties.

He was also, by means of these lectures, progressing fast in the art of preaching. The Sunday's sermon, we arranged, should be the subject of all the cottage lectures of the week past, and it is remarkable how fast he improved in adapting his style and topics to the minds and necessities of plain people. He soon learnt that the poor do not understand above one-fourth part even of the spoken language, also that this is the very part which is generally most scarce in a modern sermon.

He also found out, that while preaching of the Jews, their thoughts started off at once to the peddler whom they gibed about not eating pork; and that as to beginning with three or four pages about Ahab or Hezekiah, or other history, in order to elucidate some great truth, it were wiser a great deal to set them to sleep, and tell them to wake up ten minutes after, fresh and lively, when the said truth was to be told.

In short, Mr. Lee was fast opening his eyes to a class of facts which many a clergyman never discovered during a long life. I took the greatest interest in him. Setting him to work kept me up to my work too, and I became as proud of his performances as a man generally is when he regards them as his own. Ellen observed that I was always talking of Mr. Lee, or thinking of Mr. Lee, and, as she said in play, I was quite dreaming of Mr. Lee; and, really, he was continually in the house, either to breakfast after a wedding, or to lunch after a club-meeting, or to

take coffee in the evening; and as to the children, he was so kind in amusing them that Alice and Freddy really believed Mr. Lee liked play quite as much as they did.

But one day I saw him walking with Captain and Mrs. Bulkeley. It was but too plain they had hold of him, they were talking so earnestly. I was on the hill above, blackberrying with Alice, and I purposely stood a little back not to interrupt them. Well, Bulkeley was pouring into one ear, and Mrs. Bulkeley, with her respirator under her chin, was besieging the other; and sometimes they would stand still awhile in the road, and then go on again; and, in other ways, I could plainly perceive that they were making the very most of the opportunity.

When Ellen heard what I had witnessed she said,—

"If once Lady Newcome and party get hold of that young man, he is ruined. I know his nature. Easy and unsuspecting, with no self-reliance, or strong character of his own. He is the wax to take the impression, not the seal to stamp it, and may be led any way."

Mr. Lee was of about average strength of mind. The self-relying and the independent character is rare, and rarer still if sought in conjunction with the softer and more amiable traits of character.

Lee was one who would have found in his own courage and manliness resources enough against threats, dictation, or strong opposition in a parish; but he was now to be tried, not by fire and sword, but by tea and muffins.

Not many weeks passed before my Curate was as much in Lady Newcome's house as he had ever been in mine. The Bulkeleys had also taken him up. He very innocently observed to us, What a sad thing it was that Mrs. Bulkeley should be living on one lung! I could not help telling him of the girl in a cottage near Ilfracombe, who regularly lay in bed of consumption all the season, and made a nice thing of slops, jellies, and the coin and comforts she could draw from sympathetic visitors. I am afraid this remark of mine leaked out; at all events, a kind of wide-awake stare—which, Ellen says, I never fail to put on, with an immediate talk of something else, when any man like Bulkeley tries to impose upon me—was quite enough to tell the Bulkeleys that the one-lung story, respirator and all, were entirely thrown away upon me.

A change was clearly going on. Every visit, Lee had more and more to tell and to quote of the opinions of Lady Newcome and party, and in what kind of preaching, sermons, and doctrines

"the people" took most interest. He soon became ominously silent when I qualified his observations, and at length he would oppose or combat my opinions.

"There are other Rectors besides you, now," said Ellen, and so it proved. His style of preaching began to alter, and it was evident that my principle of addressing myself chiefly to the poor, and dwelling on plain duties, as much as the Gospel itself dwells on them, was giving place to something else.

My position became painful. What could I do? That the Newcome and Bulkeley faction never liked my style of preaching was plain enough. Persons who delight in hearing of Christian privileges, and of what is done for them, become really offended with any man who tells them of their duties, and what they must do for themselves. Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, and His discourses generally—things so plain and practical about things to be done or left undone—all this would be called a mere doctrine of works and cold morality at the present day.* Nearly all congregations would rebel against a Gospel preacher of this uncompromising class—that is, until they were used to it. The days *are* come when "they will not endure sound doctrine;" so long have they been used to be humoured with a weak solution of about one part of Gospel truth to nineteen parts of curious speculation. So, we cannot be surprised that this youth should hear that my doctrine was rather for his avoidance than his imitation; indeed, that it was really cruel that I should be permitted to lead him into anything so unspiritual, and so very far from the deeper mysteries of Evangelical truth, as any discourse truly practical, like those of our Lord and Master, is unhappily considered to be.

It is a rare thing to find a man who thinks—that is, thinks for himself. Our minds, like our bodies, follow the fashion. Men find certain ready-made views and opinions, and almost unconsciously put them on. Instead of thinking, they drift into the current of popular thought. Their minds catch the prevailing breeze, and their course is the result of motives only partially their own. So, there was a certain trade-wind—a certain Newcome-and-Bulkeley breeze—which wholly altered the course of the Rev. Wallis Lee, curate of Elkerton.

Flattery is at all times trying to vain man: but female

* This was written before I had seen the Rev. F. Robertson's Sermon (No. 12, 3rd series), in which he actually thinks it necessary to vindicate the Evangelical character of our Lord's Sermon on the Mount against those who deem it a collection of "moral precepts, and no Christianity at all!"

flattery, from ladies young and old, administered in doses, small at first but fast increasing—this, we all know, has turned the heads of the wisest in the land: so pity the case of poor Lee.

Lady Newcome and party completely monopolized him. Our hospitality was no longer required, and we saw little of him. I really believe he stayed away from feelings of honour, because he was too conscious of disaffection, and he would not make a cold return for our sympathies. He almost lived among this little set, and when I met him in their company he looked quite guilty and ill at ease, as if he were found in the camp of the enemy. Some men cannot conceal their feelings: Lee was a nervous man, with very little command of the facial angles, or of those hollow tones which betray a conscious struggle within; and Ellen could tell his face as she could tell the clock's.

Never was a poor fellow so cooped up in petticoat-lane before. If he went to the school, there were Emma and Hannah Newcome; if he went to the Clothes Club, he was met by Mrs. Bulkeley and daughter. If he went to lecture at the quarries, some other young ladies, all of the same set, happened—"quite accidentally"—to be walking that way. And really, on his way into church or out of church, and while moving to or from the desk or the pulpit, Ellen and I were painfully conscious that there was a feeling in operation that made both pastor and people think of anything but what they ought to think.

Of course the Newcomes and Bulkeleys were Dissenters at heart, though all honest Dissenters would have been ashamed of them. They were indeed malignants; and having neither humility, sincerity, nor charity, it were hard to say to what denomination of Christians they could belong.

Every town has a few shameless men, who do not pretend to any religion. Too many parishes have some who do pretend, and that is all. Happily, the truth is so far established in the hearts of our countrymen now-a-days that families like the Newcomes and Bulkeleys can no more hold their position without some pretence to religion, than without some pretence to taste, etiquette, or the common decencies of life. The real name for such persons is Pharisee: and every pastor must feel, that to make an impression even on "publicans and sinners," is not so hopeless as on those whose creed is thus only one of fashion and convenience.

As to this party, I heard much of their goings on from Mr. Cholmeley.

Cholmeley was an old Irish Barrister—very amusing, and full of stories of Curran and O'Connell, and the famous wits of that

most lovely and eloquent race of people. Cholmeley lodged just out of Manton. He was poor; but since his was a kind of pride which kindles rather at work than victuals, he went about with the *sobriquet* of 'the big Irish beggar-man,'—for he weighed fifteen stone, and ate up to his weight—from house to house, like a kind of Edie Ochiltree, paying freely by his tongue for the damage of his teeth.

Well, Cholmeley I found one day as I came home to luncheon hard at it, with evidently something to tell, and Emily listening with both her ears. Lady Newcome and party had arranged a deputation from—a very Low-church Society, and Mr. Lee was to move one resolution, and part of the fun was to see how I should receive the proposition. Lady Newcome, he said, rather slily, was to stand a breakfast, and had given Mr. Lee a fortnight's notice to get ready an extempore prayer for the occasion.

Mr. Lee had now been with me nearly two years. I could take no formal exception to his conduct, but I could see that a kind of romance and philandering was sapping and undermining all the honest energy of his character. Besides, either his preaching was a reflection on mine, or mine on his; and I could not find fault, because his sermons taken singly were sound: it was the studied avoidance of the personal and practical that rendered them as useless in my judgment as they were "charming" in that of other people.

Annoyed as I was with my curate, I could not help feeling some little pity and indulgence. For, when did a party of ladies ever try hard to make a goose of any young man and not succeed? —The moment we hear of a bank defaulter or embezzling clerk, we are sure to suspect a woman in the case. Every George Barnwell has his Millwood. And if our admiration of the wisdom of Westminster Hall is ever qualified by a *but* or a shake of the head, it is not partiality, or taking bribes, or any other infirmity, but always—a woman.

Now, the clergy are proof against the grosser vices, and that with a degree of inviolability which few laymen would believe if stated. But shut off as they are from all manly exercise, except on the sly, and condemned by a vicious public opinion to look something between masculine and feminine—a kind of man-milliner gender—what wonder if they do grow womanish, and yield to the platonic and the more insidious form of that female influence from which even the wisest is not free?

The way in which this female influence betrayed itself in my curate was, that it took all manhood out of his preaching. In-

stead of the plain speaking and stirring language he was learning in the cottage—"And Nathan said unto David, Thou art the man!"—his whole tone was soft, and emotional, and almost sentimental. In short, he was preaching to the women, and utterly ignored the men—administering a kind of mild emulsion that would not hurt a baby.

But soon Captain Bulkeley came hammering and stammering with a request to me, as their "Rector," to take part in the intended platform meeting. He was going on with "The intention was ——," when I cut the matter short by saying,—

"The intention, Captain Bulkeley, I will spare you the difficulty of explaining: I am as well aware of the whole matter as you can be"—and here I looked him hard and significantly in the face, while he tried to stammer out something else, for he now seemed ashamed of his errand—"However, good comes out of evil, and since the object of this Society is a very good one, though, you are well aware, your meeting must supersede one to which your Rector gives a preference, I shall be ready to—to *preside*—at the time appointed."

We soon heard from old Cholmeley that they were now completely checkmated. Mr. Lee felt his undertaking a speech, while such feelings prevailed, rather unpromising, and soon came to me for some understanding on the subject. At the same time, I heard that the moths had buzzed about the candle, till two at least had singed their wings. Fanny Bulkeley and Hannah Newcome were both captivated with the Rev. Wallis Lee. And as to his intentions to either, if these intentions might be measured by his prospects, they were rather doubtful. The fact was, the ladies, as usual, admitted the Curate as a kind of brother—a privileged man, a safe man, "a kind of betweenity"—and he—soft and unsuspecting—had quietly acquiesced in all the confidence and comforts of his pastoral position, and might, perhaps, have supposed that—considering their certain age, and yet more certain absence of charms—they never could have thought he meant anything. So, if they worked him slippers, he drew or wrote for their scrap-book, and, in so doing, might never have dreamed that poetical nonsense had a meaning when turned into prose: and the end of it was, that he heard indirectly from middle-aged ladies, who were, no doubt, set on for the purpose, that if he had not any intentions, as an honourable man he ought to have some.

This increased Mr. Lee's perplexity wonderfully, and as old Cholmeley was consoler in ordinary, and had a passing word for everybody, of course he had a little to say to the Curate too.

"It so happened," said the humorous old gentleman, "that I met him where the new bridge is building: so we came to a stand-still, and were soon in the middle of our story. I reminded him of the investment in tea, jam, and early dinners and currant-wine, which had been made on his account, and insisted that he ought to have known that 'there was nothing for nothing in this world;' above all, where people did not afford puddings every day, and where muffins meant company.

"'But,' said he, in dismay, 'I only went when I was asked: they would not leave me alone; they were always sending for me.'

"'Yes,' I said, 'Mr. Lee. But there is a certain conventional language you do not understand, and which I should do well to explain to you: but,' I said, as something caught my eye, 'can you read that builder's notice-board?'

"'Certainly,' he said: 'No admittance except on business.'

"'There,' I said, 'Mr. Lee; now never forget that notice-board when asked by a lady, with single daughters, day after day, to tea and muffins, quite as one of the family.'"

Naturally it was not very hard to induce this specimen of a curate demoralized to leave. There is one thing which, in a dull, country place, every one is yearning for — excitement; and this they will extract out of anything.

A gossip, or a bit of scandal, such as our curate's dishonourable conduct — dishonourable, that is, in not returning in love what he ate in muffins — or the Newcome and Bulkeley league against the Rector, which ended in a lovesick and talked-of daughter to sigh all comfort out of the house of each; this spread like wildfire, and everybody called on everybody else on purpose to talk the matter over, and turn it inside out.

No wonder, therefore, that poor Lee should walk about very uncomfortable, and that all the duties of the *minister* should seem to him a mockery, while every one was thinking of the folly of the *man*. In short, the minister was gone already — it only remained for the man to go, too.

I gave him full time to realize his unhappy position, and then, with all the cheerfulness, and good humour, and pity, too, I could express, I began a little advice as to his future conduct — advice which I sincerely hope may be of use to others, too.

I said that I could make some allowance for the influence exerted by the ladies, but the fault was in placing himself in that position; that every profession had its indispensable virtue, and an *esprit de corps* which gave that virtue half its strength: thus,

the soldier must always show courage; the judge impartiality; the lawyer and the banker strict confidence: as to the doctor, no one scarcely hears of the frailty of the man compromising professional honour with female patients.

And what was to be the minister's *forte?* — A high sense of ministerial duty. The female arts of Herodias ended — we know how fatally, to one! The arts of Lady Newcome and party had sentimentalized his preaching, and destroyed all confidence in his Rector, and eventually had turned the pastor of a parish into a mere creature of romance — a trifler, and a lady's toy.

He must now leave Elkerton. Go where he would, he would find middle-aged ladies like Lady Newcome — a mere sentimental edition of the Lady Bellingham of Fielding — and he would find also younger ladies, as at Elkerton, who would fawn upon the minister only to flirt with the man.

I was far from saying that most lady-parishioners were not pure in their motives when assisting in the parish. But one line of conduct only could preserve such purity, and shield the clergy from maudlin sentimentality, and consequently from the suspicion and contempt of all good men — namely, to treat lady visitors with strict professional reserve and distance; and to remember that the minister and the man are two distinct characters, as also are a lady parishioner and a lady friend; and that if the clergy receive far more attention than other men, they must not regard the honour as paid only to themselves, but as paid to the high and sacred character with which — with heartfelt satisfaction be it said — the laity instinctively invest them.

I finally urged him never to forget, that clergymen who did not hold themselves above slippers, crochet, and cough lozenges, and who sank to the level of handers of muffins and the ladies' man, were demoralized for their office, and were guilty of encouraging a sickly kind of confidence, not one whit better than the prurient confession and the morbid practices of Rome.

CHAPTER XX.

A LITTLE DAYLIGHT IN THE DARK FORTUNES OF MRS. SHARK—WHILE WE ARE ALL EAGER IN THE PURSUIT OF HER GAY DECEIVER, SOMETHING OCCURS TO SOBER US.

I MUST now revert to the visit of Mrs. Shark, and tell of all the ways and means taken, as well as talked of, to redress her wrongs.

When we heard she was coming, feelings of sympathy as well as delicacy made us feel quite a difficulty as to the tone and the manner with which to receive our guest; but, as Mrs. Shark stepped out of the carriage, her off-hand manner—though she did give me an expressive squeeze of the hand—and the firm tone in which she directed the servant, plainly showed that it was no mere pensioner at a house of refuge we were now taking in.

She talked freely—though we could detect those hollow tones and that occasional absence that mark a troubled mind—about her journey and matters of common interest, and hinted almost parenthetically with a smile—as at the strange course of her fortunes—that she would speak of business on the morrow.

"A great man struggling with misfortunes," in ancient times was a sight to see; but, as to pictures of some illustrious exile tearing himself from wife and family, or, of some noble mother standing unmoved amidst the shock of nature, those days are now gone by. If the age is too mechanical for poetry, for tragedy, or stirring adventure, it is too business-like and matter-of-fact—too little is done by the indignant sufferer, and too much by proxy or by agency, till all pathos or passion gives way to the slow machinery of the law.

When the morrow came, I invited Mrs. Shark into my study, which she understood as a hint to begin. I soon found that the impulsive nature and the proud spirit of Mrs. Shark were by no means subdued. Indeed, her temper sympathised with the fretted

irritability of her whole system. She was full of crude notions of remedy to be expected by law. Her version of Messrs. Tinleys' remarks was strange indeed. I tried, and tried in vain, to bring her to any definite point, and to start with anything tangible and practicable for my exertions. At length I thought I must let her tire herself out, and find vent for her bubbling and superfluous energies in the full flood of angry words and turbid thoughts to which I was doomed to listen.

One thing she said was, that she had no idea of being burthensome to young people like us, and that she should wish to contribute to the housekeeping. And, to this end, she proposed to borrow two hundred pounds for the present—and I certainly understood she wanted me to lend it—that she might pay as she went, and have money at her command, and not be hampered in her legal operations.

Even my dear mother, who could rarely see a joke, laughed exceedingly when she heard of this very proper and liberal-minded offer not to distress us, and said we should be taking out of one pocket far more than we put into the other.

This proposal I waived by some courteous remark, and said we must wait the course of events, and not be in any unnecessary hurry—and so that day passed away, and many other days passed the same. "If there was no redress for wrongs like hers," she declared, morning, noon and night, "the land was not worth living in." And then, after talking herself into a state of red-hot excitement, she would start off, almost before the cloth was removed, to her own room, and, unlike Ovid's lover, who cut out his ditty on the trees, she would vent her rancour, as a poet would say, "in mountains of cream-laid and rivers of japan."

Mr. "Leather-legs," the postman—for, so the children called him—said he could have told there was a "summut," even if he had not heard it; the lady was always running out to meet him when he came, and sending some one after him when he was carrying letters away.

"What!" said Ellen, "and do the people talk of this unhappy match at the houses around?"

"Talk, ma'am!" said the man with a start of surprise. "Yes, I'm blessed if they don't, ma'am. They are getting pretty near tired of it now, ma'am, but at one time, at every house I stopped at—whether 'twas a footman, or whether 'twas a parlour-maid—they would ask about the 'widder and her young man,' just as if the French were coming."

I heard quite enough to corroborate the postman's story.

Bulkeley, and Lady Newcome, and Horton, and everybody who "owed me one," met me with a kind of half-smile—most impertinent, and indeed most irritating to my feelings—and sometimes they would make inquiries how we were *all* at home; in a way that feelingly reminded me of my difficulty, and made me exclaim, "How ill-natured people are!"

My friend James now came and philosophised, and said there was no such thing as virtue made easy, and that all this talk, and envy, and ill-nature, we ought to look at as part and parcel of our undertaking. He also quoted a maxim of Epictetus, so truly wise and valuable, that it has saved Ellen and me at various times from much unnecessary vexation in every-day life.

"A wise man," says Epictetus, "will always consider what troubles and annoyances are incidental to any course, and by regarding it as part of the bargain first of all, he will avoid all irritation afterwards: for instance, before I determine on going to the bath, I consider what usually happens at the bath—that I am jostled going to it, splashed by others in the water, and have my clothes wetted coming out. If I don't think all this worth while, I don't go to bathe; but if I reckon it part of bathing, I avoid ruffling my equanimity."

"But how should we apply that rule?" said Ellen.

"Why, domestically: perquisites are part of cooks, quarrels part of servants, constant interruption part of housekeeping; so, live in lodgings if you don't like to take all that is involved in a private house: or—to come to your present trial—the temper, the grievance, the restlessness of the much-injured Mrs. Shark, and the sneers and impudence of petty people, are only part and parcel of the duty you have undertaken. Look at it in that point of view, and remember you undertook it as a duty—and as a voluntary sacrifice, and from that moment the burthen will be lighter by half."

Really this advice was of great comfort to us. It came just at the time that, after conceiving a generous resolution, we were in danger of grumbling it all away. Add to this, our pity and commiseration helped a little too. We found that Mrs. Shark rarely walked beyond the garden, and when she went to church, or walked as far as the village, her resolute step and stately determined carriage plainly told any calm observer the contention of mind that all this effort was intended to conceal. All this time letter upon letter was exchanged with her lawyer, apparently without any prospect of success, but not without working the unhappy lady, at times, into a state of frenzy. No one who has

not experienced it can imagine the slow torture of "the law's delays." No one can imagine the inextricable difficulty into which a lady may glide in ten minutes, not to be unravelled in a year!

Nothing is more ludicrous than to compare the red-hot letter of the client, with the impassive and almost soul-less reply of the lawyer. The very heading of a lawyer's letter, "*Re* Shark," is most unsympathetic, and virtually tells you that "you are in for it." You have heard of lawsuits, and here is one for yourself—for your own special use and gratification. It also implies that the office is full of suits like yours, and "*Re* Shark" is therefore a very necessary label, for fear they should mistake which injured woman out of a dozen or two you may happen to be.

No wonder then that our poor friend grew thinner and thinner, and more and more nervous. At last she asked the doctor to give her quinine for her nerves—but we wanted something for our nerves too; for, we were kept always on the fret and fidget, and all the maids, especially at post time, were ever on the trot till they spoke of leaving their situation—"You told us, please, ma'am," said Hannah, "it was to be a quiet family we were hired into, and we are so hurry-skurried about we might as well be hired for a madhouse."

At last Uncle Ben, who was tired of joking about the lady, neither widow nor wife, observed that, though Messrs. Tinleys' was a first-rate firm, still this did seem slow work. They were, probably working at a disadvantage; and, as he was going to London—without taking the business out of Tinley's hands—he would call at Lincoln's Inn and inquire about the suit.

This was indeed a happy day for Mrs. Shark: for, Ben Austin—like other men half retired from business—had a large stock of spare activities on hand: and—since he also liked to be first and foremost, or, as James said, to be an "Upper Benjamin," especially where he saw victory was pretty easy—he was the very man to assist in getting up evidence and finding out expedients, which a more busy man might overlook.

When Uncle Ben returned from London, he came to me, really in earnest, full of the case of "Shark *v.* Shark," and very sanguine of success—that is, sanguine because it was his nature: his pulse beat full and quick, and he was a man of sanguineous temperament, which even water-drinking would not keep low—still, the case was a very doubtful one. "If I do win it," said he, chuckling, "it will be the most creditable piece of business I have done for years. However, there is certainly a good point or two in the

case, and one a very good one indeed. But, bless us! they would never have got on with such a client as Mrs. Shark—her letters crossed and recrossed, and all one jumble of facts, fancies, and grievances, all mixed up together."

After a little time, he came to the plan of operations.

"There is not so much time wasted after all," said Uncle Ben.

"What," I asked, "is it out of term time?"

"No, no, but the young vagabond must have time to run through his ready money, otherwise my plan won't answer."

"He had," I observed, "the proceeds of the furniture, but that was to pay off his debts."

"So we calculate," said the lawyer; "but there was 800*l.* besides, of which Mrs. Shark remained sole trustee for herself for life, the capital also being as good as hers, because that old man cannot live much longer."

—The old man in question died shortly after, but I have more to say about that 800*l.* cash presently.—

"We found him," he continued, "in the hands of a regular thief's attorney—Winsom and Small is the firm. Winsom, when managing clerk to Slatter, used Slatter's name to a process that put a respectable old man into the Bench. For this offence Winsom had three months in prison. That was the making of him: for, every sharper in London wants a man 'not particular,' and Winsom had a large practice of a queer kind within two years after he was at liberty."

Clients like Mr. Shark can only go to lawyers like Mr. Winsom: for, no others will lend themselves to their iniquity. This is fortunate. Such lawyers would as soon rob their client as the other party, and of course, when his money runs short, they will throw him over, and make any terms to pay their bill.

Mrs. Shark observed, that she hoped matters would be speedily settled: for, her Christmas bills were yet unpaid, and the tradesmen were continually writing to her.

"Excellent!" said Uncle Ben; "that is just what we want. The more bills the better. Every bill will be one action more to trouble your amiable spouse."

At this Mrs. Shark brightened up. She had never thought there could be so good a use made of unpaid bills before.

"Then," she said, "those people who keep the black shop—what do you call them?"

"The Sponsalia warehouse you mean," suggested Uncle Ben, slily.

"No, no. I mean the other sort of shop. But I owe the

Sponsalia shop something, too. It was the Mourning shop I was thinking of."

"Well, well. Never mind what it was for," said Uncle Ben, smiling. "Whether the mourning for that first husband, or the wedding *trousseau* for the second ——"

Here we interfered, and called him to order. But Mrs. Shark, for the first time in her life, was in no mood to quarrel with Benjamin Austin's much-dreaded jokes.

"But how much does it all come to?" said he.

"Why, 200*l.* is the sum I was about to draw, when I found he had stopped my cheques at the bank, and had all my money put in his own name. It was this that made the final rupture."

"Well," said her friend, "that was something better worth quarrelling about than ordinary between fond couples, certainly. However, here are two actions for about 100*l.* each. But, is there anything more?"

Mrs. Shark freshened up her memory, and soon said,—

"Oh, yes, there is the upholsterer, and two bonnet-makers, and a shoemaker and a linen-warehouse, and ——" till the lawyer cried, "Enough, enough!"

"Why, as to that," said Mrs. Shark, "I could easily run up some more, if there were any advantage in it, for I am very short of everything at this time."

"I have not the least doubt of it," said he; "but we have found some people in Paddyland equally obliging."

"What!" we exclaimed, "more debts and more actions? and from creditors in Ireland, too!"

"No, no," said Uncle; "but our game is twofold. While the run upon him for money must be very great, we must manage that the supply of money shall become very small. So, we write letters to all the Irish tenants, saying that, pending some dispute between their present landlord and their late landlady, perhaps they would oblige us by paying neither. And you can't think what a civil fellow Paddy showed himself to be. They all, to a man, promised to oblige us to the utmost of their power."

"But can he not sue the tenants?" I inquired.

"Legally, yes," was the reply; "but practically, no. We will find him quite actions enough to defend without his wanting to trouble himself with bringing any. We have a suit for alimony against him already."

While all this plan was coming out, Mrs. Shark looked at Uncle Ben—albeit she detested him for jokes and plain-speaking in times past—as a veritable conjurer, and as a perfect wonder of

legal science and acumen, and—as I am sorry to confess, that she was not above that natural, too natural, spite and vindictiveness which people mistake for a pure sense of justice, for she said "hanging was too good for the rogue"—every suit and process was as music in her ears; nor could she have been more gladdened with the sound of lashes on his recreant back. I confess that we all entered at the time with no little zest into this imaginary chase—feeling very little mercy in letting loose the hell-hounds of the law.

However, this animated conference or council of war at last was at an end; and Ellen and I started, with the children running and playing about us, sometimes behind and sometimes before, to take a walk; and as I felt the pure breeze of heaven blow cool on my flushed and excited cheek, while the birds sang sweetly and merrily, and not at all in harmony with that morning's strife of tongues, I fully sympathised in Ellen's hearty wish, that all the prosecutions and the quarrelling, whether by proxy or personally, were well at an end, and that peace and quiet were once more restored, both to our own home and also to one poor lady's heart.

We walked and sat down occasionally for about two hours: and, by that time, the tumult of our feelings was allayed, and certain restless emotions, like naughty children, were laid asleep; though for a time we felt quite in a whirl, and did not know how the hours of the day had passed. We then were returning by the Mill, when at one of the cottages, principally tenanted by the miller's workmen, we saw quite a crowd of women without bonnets, and men in their shirt-sleeves, and Mr. Molton, the miller, apparently giving directions, while there was a very ominous-looking stretcher, denoting an accident, standing on end against the wall.

"Make way for the Minister, and his lady too," said Hannah Yatman; "let the gentlefolk have a sight. And out of the way, you children—you've seen it times enough—if you don't never see another. Here it is, ma'am, here it is—the doctor have just a cut it off:" and before we were aware, a bloodstained cloth was snatched away from the dresser, and a poor miller's mangled hand and arm disclosed, hideous and shocking to behold.

Poor Ellen almost fainted; and, with all my experience, I felt very sick. However, I led her away to the miller's house, and desiring his wife to take care of her, and not to speak of the shocking occurrence, I returned to give what comfort I could to the unhappy sufferer.

"He is not fit for nothing but a 'pike" (meaning, to keep a turnpike-gate), said one man; "and he has been a earning fifteen

shillings a-week regular, and had his bans up, you know, sir, last Sunday; and there's Harriet Hopkins is just gone up to him, and she is in a fine way about it."

Before long poor Harriet came down, wiping her eyes with the corner of her apron, and as she threaded her way through the crowd of women, who were making the most of the little importance as well as freedom of speech which such an accident—appealing as it does to our common nature—never fails to bestow, one of them said, "A bad job for you, Harriet, this is. You must be married—one arm short now—you must. But, how ever is he going to keep you, and only one arm as he can work with?"

This I repeated word for word to Ellen, and remarked that the Newcome and Bulkeley nature—feeding like crows on carrion, and finding their sweets in a neighbour's cup of bitterness—that this is found everywhere, and partakes of that leaven of envy and jealousy which it is wise ever to expect in another and most anxiously to suppress in ourselves.

I found the sufferer too weak, and indeed too tired, by his many visitors—for, his room was close to suffocation from the crowd—for me to say much; however, after a few solemn words and something short for him to think of, I ventilated his room, and cleared and set a kind of guard over the house, and promising some wine and other comforts, I left him till the morrow.

Poor Will Harris! for he it was—the pride and the strength of our Cricket Club!

Of course, I always knew that the loss of a limb to a labourer was most severe, but to that hour I had never fully realized it.

"Why, sir," said he, "an arm don't much matter to a gentleman like you, who have nothing particular to do with one; but it's all my fortune—all my bread. I am no more good than a woman, and not as much: and—*I shall never play cricket no more!*"

Neither Ellen nor I can ever forget that day. By the time we retired to rest, it seemed as if we had passed many days in one, so violently had our hearts been stirred with feelings of the harsher and the sterner kind in the morning, with a revulsion of all that is tender and melting with pity before evening!

This was indeed a lesson for us. More and more heartily did we wish that all the lawsuits were at an end, and our once quiet home no more the witness of strife and resentment, however just the cause. "For," said Ellen, "when all these fearful catastrophes remind us that Providence is pleased to strew our path with suffering and sorrow, how dreadful to think that any persons should be employed in plotting more of themselves!"

CHAPTER XXI.

HOW I AM REGARDED AS A MAR-PLOT, AND BECOME UNPOPULAR, AND NOT SAFE COMPANY — HOW CLOUD FOLLOWS CLOUD — MRS. SHARK IS A SAD INCUMBRANCE! — WE FIND A CLUE TO MRS. SEYMOUR'S HISTORY.

About the time Mr. Wallis Lee took his departure, I was, indeed, in a state of general perplexity. It is all very well to talk of a "quiet parsonage;" but if any one could have known all the quakes and fears at the sight of every letter from without, or the many little tiffs we had within, he would understand storms even in the *Pacific* Ocean. Mrs. Shark being in a delicate position, took everything as personal. Such words as Poverty or Dependence were banished from our vocabulary: and, indeed, I could not talk of the Union or a pauper's allowance, but Ellen would give me a kick of admonition under the table.

Then, Brother Tom's scrapes became more and more frequent. Uncle Ben had endured and indulged Tom for a while, simply because the day for him to go and see practice in London was drawing nigh. And, now that Tom was fairly launched there, on his own hands and his own master, again and again I was called on to pay for one difficulty, or "to advance" money for another — every compliance bringing me deeper into the mire, because it became all the more painful to think of an alternative which would throw the whole venture made on his profession, and all the money to save it, utterly away.

Mrs. Shark became daily more troublesome as her patience was exhausted by the law's delays. No one can imagine how difficult a part we had to play. Her touchiness was extreme. One day, for a diversion, Ellen began talking of Lamb's *Elia:* and, taking up that charming volume, I floundered at once into his life-like description of the Poor Relation. I soon realized my position. To stop, was to make it personal indeed; and in my

attempt to read on, I was all but convulsed by my contending feelings. In other ways I was always in hot water. If I said little about her lawsuit, I seemed not sympathetic; and if I said much, I appeared as if I wanted to get rid of her. She had now been with me nearly two years, and required so much of my attentions, lest she should seem to be slighted in her misfortunes, that Ellen really began to look as if I were indifferent to her, and to feel as if Mrs. Shark were mistress of the house.

Neither did Martha, as now reinstated, much mend the matter. Martha and Mrs. Shark soon evinced a dire antipathy for each other. For, Martha made so great a mistake as to put herself on a level, and draw comparisons as to their semi-widowed states and loss of fortune; and while she was thus pretending an amiable fellow-feeling for Mrs. Shark, that lady's spirit took fire at being pitied by a nursemaid, and the result was some such set-down reply as drew forth from Martha a retort that "*some persons* could not even work for their livelihood."

Then my mother and Emily, and the precarious tenure of their small income, made me every pay-day more nervous than ever. They were living on their expectations. Their income had been already so far reduced that I had not the heart to make them feel poorer still. One contingency *might*—but since the future is always doubtful, it also *might not*—make all safe. Old Mrs. Farley stood between them and 300*l.* a-year, and we felt almost sure (not quite) that that income must be ours—and Mrs. Farley was above eighty—her life we all thought a burthen, and death a happy release;—a kind of observation that every one makes so much sooner than the party in possession. In this state of things, the idea of Brother Tom being thrown upon my mother to keep, to me was positive distraction. So the name either of Tom or of my mother, and, indeed, of old Mrs. Farley—for Fanny, when she was cross, would vexatiously predict we should never see a penny of the Farley money—or a letter about either of them, was sure to throw my nerves into such a state of vibration, that they would not cease to twang for the rest of the day.

And now, all this electioneering quarrel left me as little rest out of doors as I had within. No doubt you may say that I had no positive occasion to care how black the people looked, or what they said. Still, mortal eyes like pleasant looks, and mortal ears like pleasant words; and I will not believe any man who says he can quite enjoy himself with a bleak north-east aspect on every visage. It is true, you can set your back up; but then you have that to do.

The plain truth was, I was decidedly unpopular. Horton and

party had put me under a ban. They had considerable influence in those parts, and had given the cue to the whole parish; and if I went into Manton, it was the same. Having voted for neither party, I had made enemies of the Conservatives without obliging the Whigs. "What!" said the *Manton Herald*, "What must be the conduct of this libel on all Conservatism, when their own Pastor is ashamed of them, and his pulpit rings with their atrocious dealings?"

If I say that certain professional men would not walk the same side of the street with me, no persons who live in a small borough town will infer any reflection upon myself. There is literally a Reign of Terror in such places. A man is soon suspected of fraternising with the enemy; and where there are two of a trade, one is always ready to blow the spark to a flame, in order to secure for himself the customers or the clients that the other is doomed to lose. The abuse and rancour that prevailed between members of adverse parties was really fearful. Nine out of ten did not know Whig principles from Tory. Nay, the so-called Tories were guilty of the most radical conduct: still, each called the other not only foolish or prejudiced, but knaves, and villains —which Warburton said was "the true spirit of orthodoxy—to allow your adversary neither common sense nor common honesty."

Men may talk of the tyranny and despotism of France, and spies in every circle; so that, as Tacitus says, their very sighs for liberty are numbered: but what can be so searching and so subtle as the tyranny of a mob, whose spies are everywhere—men who can actually increase their own trade by raising a cry against a neighbour?

There was Dr. Warren, who spoke in a cordial, friendly way, with me one morning, and his daughters were significantly reminded of his sympathies before night. Certain lady visitors, also, from Manton—wives and daughters of professional men—did not now pay one visit to the Rectory where they used to pay five: and one of them plainly told Ellen the hints she had received from their political friends and employers, "that it did seem very odd what they could have to do with such people as the Austins."

However, I paid little attention to this. I pitied the poor silly people who gave way—as I then thought, so needlessly—to such idle remarks. I little suspected that it was to some a question of solvency or ruin. I did not know that the majority had small incomes, and could barely make both ends meet—still less that their last twenty customers made the profit, so the loss of a few names in their books put their heads below water. It was natural,

therefore, that I should suppose that my unpopularity touched only myself, and that I should scorn to complain, or even to give the matter a thought; though, after all, I could not help giving it a thought, much as I blamed myself for allowing the least corner of my mind to anything so trifling.

And now my parochial subscriptions fell off; for, no one volunteered to collect: and as to my applying in person at certain houses, it was only placing myself in the way of impertinence. But, no matter. Ten or twenty pounds, more or less, was a small sum to pay for consistency: and I observed to Ellen how happy we ought to feel that our income was beyond the reach of that malevolence which would peck us where it could, and that liberty of speech and conscience could not be taken from us.

All this we one day expressed in the presence of Mrs. Seymour; thinking, of course, that that lady, as well as her husband, whose free and generous spirit was beyond all question, would laugh at the covert threats that were a terror to the small people of Manton.

"You may indeed be thankful," said Mrs. Seymour, with a sigh. "Mr. Seymour has often declared he knew that a mere crust was the lot of a man who would indulge in the luxury of a free and manly spirit. And that, Ellen, is the only reason that his talents have never reaped their due reward."

"What!" said Ellen; "is all this fear of consequences—all this slavish custom of trembling at the breath of impertinent and silly people—is this founded on either sense or prudence?"

"Yes, dear," said Mrs. Seymour, calmly, and quite with an air of resignation. "I can assure you it is. But to feel it is one thing, to give way to it is another. Little did I know, when I resolved to share the fortunes of Mr. Seymour, that a professional income is earned not only with the labour of the hands and the racking of the brain, but also with the blushes of ingenuous shame, and at the cost of stifling the noblest emotions of the heart. Many a time and oft have I breathed a painful spirit into those feeling words of Hamlet:—

> 'For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
> The oppressor's wrongs, the proud man's contumely,
> The insolence of office, and the spurns
> That patient merit of the unworthy takes?'

—But never mind—we have held our own *till this time*, and may do so a *little longer*—'no cross, no crown,' is true of all the triumphs both of earth and heaven."

These words, said thoughtfully and with emphasis, attracted our attention in more ways than one,—"We have held our own till this time;" and she had once before said that the time must come when we should know more of her history: and once more, "No cross, no crown." What did all this mean? We talked and mused much about this mystery all that evening—doubly mysterious because from one who was all candour and transparency itself. At last we could only suppose that some noble resolution was being carried through, and the battle of life fought out in earnest.

Our attention was very soon painfully excited on another point, namely, the state of Mr. Seymour's practice. Mr. Seymour had joined me in all my plans of social improvement, and he was quite identified with the Rectory, while his wife and Ellen were as sisters. Old Cholmeley once told us that our giving a preference in friendship to two persons "who were not noticed in the county," looked as if we affected independence, and meant to treat "the set" very coolly.

This alone caused a jealousy of the Seymours, and, as Cholmeley said, "did them no good." "And now," said the old man, "I can plainly see the people think they have found out the joints of your harness, and they will not scruple to ruin Seymour to make you feel their trumpery spleen."

"Impossible!" I said: "such littleness!"

"Don't deceive yourself," he replied; "nothing is too little for such homœopathic souls as theirs."

Seymour was so honest a fellow that the Horton party could not feel at ease in his presence. To all their clamour against me, and talk to justify themselves, instead of a reply he made a pause, which their own consciences filled with no pleasant reflections. It was plain to them that Seymour was disaffected. It was plain he knew the sad story of old Stubbs, and the fatal end of that disgraceful conduct by which "the County" had compromised its honour. It was remembered that he joined in my tea-and-coffee opposition to the "Stag Inn." In short, it was plain that keeping my company "did Seymour no good," and the consequences were soon but too apparent.

"Seymour has done for himself," said Uncle Ben; "or, rather, you have done for him, Harry. *The County Whig* has such a leader! It points to you—don't be flattered—as the one man of sense and conscience in the Conservative party, and says that you are ashamed of them, and stand aloof from their company. I told you what a hornets' nest you would have about your ears, but

you did not mind me. But you have jeopardised me, too. I am unpopular—but that's a trifle. Think of poor Seymour."

"Why, what's the matter with Seymour?" I replied, sensitively.

"The County people won't employ him, save one or two perhaps. Mrs. Kent says she doesn't care for politics, when Seymour alone understands all her complaints; but the rest, who have nothing the matter with them, declare they would rather die first."

This created quite an alarm. Every day we saw so much rancour and petty feeling, that even this persecution of my friend became credible, and soon Ellen found that Mrs. Seymour kept only one servant instead of two, and that her time seemed wholly taken up within doors, and she had little time to visit: and soon we heard unkind reflections on Mr. Seymour's credit.

Mrs. Seymour soon after told Ellen she must not deem it unfriendly if she saw little of her—retrenchment was necessary; and labour, manual as well as mental, was her duty. The practice had fallen off, and as the expenses were considerable, one horse was all that the Doctor could afford.

All this gave us serious concern, feeling that we had been the innocent cause. Ellen soon resolved on inviting Mrs. Seymour's confidence, and asked what she could do to help her.

"Time will work a cure," was the reply—"though time, to the unhappy, has leaden wings. But one thing you can do—one thing only—of great, of the greatest possible service. My little Mary wants companions. The vulgar habits she may contract in the village no future fortune can correct. Let her come frequently among your little ones, and I shall be more obliged than words can express. I can bear all the stings of poverty—temporary poverty—but one, and that I dread indeed. I mean, any evil influence on my dear child."

This favour we most readily accorded; and in one way more I was able to be of great assistance. I proposed that we should economise by keeping our horses together, and lent the Doctor my pony whenever his one horse wanted rest.

If it is as true of a Rector as a Bishop, that he "should be given to hospitality," I had now one unprotected female in the parlour, another in the nursery, and a horse in the stable. The further I went, the more heavily I was laden; and it seemed as if Homer's cloud-compelling Jove had rolled up some very threatening storms, and I almost despaired that they would ever disperse.

"A man," said Dr. Johnson, "is only happy while he knows he is happy." The contrary must be no less true. While you can forget your misery it is gone. So, a kindly Providence, in the way of painless operations, makes one trouble the salve for another. Just now we had an addition to our nursery, and poor Ellen lay for some days in a state of the greatest danger. All the consequences of her loss crowded on my mind, and the sight of the children who might be motherless was really distracting. For, nothing could I do to allay her fever—or, indeed, the fever of another kind, that inwardly consumed myself. I was almost forbidden to go near her, so I could not divert my grief by action, and could only count the minutes to the Doctor's visit, and then read his fears in his kind and sympathising looks.

Mrs. Shark now appeared to great advantage. Her strong will and energy stirred and roused me to exertion; for the ladies can teach the gentlemen a lesson on these occasions. Night after night did she watch untiringly by Ellen. Indeed, she had seen much of illness, and had that intuitive perception of the wants and the weakness of the sick, and so exactly did she time all food to the power to take it, that she preserved my dear wife from all fatigue or inanition, while nature's process was in due course.

Her efforts were crowned with success. In about seven weeks she was once more among us, and Mrs. Shark was evidently all the happier, and put us more at our ease, because proud in the consciousness of some return for all she had received.

Many a time have I felt ashamed of my former prejudice against Mrs. Shark. "The impulsive female," as I had called her, it was now so manifest, only wanted a right direction. She had a warm heart, but for years it was chilled: she had the milk of human kindness, but for years it was soured. She made Mr. Horley a much better wife than he deserved; and, considering that she was shut up in a lone country house with one man, and lived day after day without any exercise for the softer feelings, without any sympathy or the least response—that her mind had its pivot on one human being of the callous, cold, and flinty sort—I would as willingly put the woman I love in a madhouse, and should as little expect her temper to preserve its calm or her moral nature generally to remain unimpaired.

Even, pending the constant irritation of this torturing suit, Mrs. Shark, save daily remembrances of her cruel treatment, showed signs of improvement. The children helped to tune one string, and Ellen's kindness another; and as to Mrs. Seymour, the very way she would walk up to Mrs. Shark's end of the room,

and sit down beside her, and listen to her complaints, while she smoothed off the edge of them, resting her full, soft, and pity-beaming eye like a charm to deprecate each angry feeling, was quite enough to tell me that Elkerton Rectory was no bad school "for a lady of neglected education."—All this tuned other chords in this poor lady's jarring and discordant nature.

Will Harris's bad arm, I am sure, was a blessing to her. Morning, noon, and night she would walk down, sometimes with a cushion, sometimes with soup, or anything she could make, or we would give her, for poor Will: all this was delightful to see, and many a page in my sermon was intended to suit her peculiar state of feeling.

One incident, as it happened just as I was now driving Ellen out for the first time after her illness, I must mention here.

I have already introduced Sally Brewer's wicked nurse—Mary Dart. Mary's daughter was now about sixteen, tutored, as we knew, in all the vice of the wretched mother, and for about a year they had both disappeared from the neighbourhood. Imagine, therefore, Ellen's feelings, when she saw this depraved couple installed by a friend of Lady Newcome as nurse and under-nurse, and addressed so softly and familiarly as to show that they were considered as confidential servants, and as most valuable for the children.—We could do nothing. We knew that all we could say would only be parried and treated with suspicion, as something personal, and as if the Darts were not of our opinions or of our party. Such feelings are very sad, but not confined to Elkerton. When I hear of precocious vice in the family of worthy parents, I often think of Mary Dart.

And now my old anxieties returned, ushered in by a most harassing letter from Brother Tom. Things now seemed with him nearly at their worst, and therefore they began to mend. So says a true proverb; and the reason that they mend is, because you are compelled no longer to patch them up, but to adopt some radical cure. But this cure in Brother Tom's case must be told in another chapter.

I left poor Will Harris, the hero of our little cricket-club—fallen, fallen, fallen, fallen from his high estate—almost too weak to talk to me, with his once powerful arm lying mangled on the table. In a few weeks Will was about again, and what was to be done for him?—I can imagine how pain forgot itself in pleasure when the poor soldier at Scutari was surprised by the noiseless step of their lady-friend. This I can well understand when I remember how that poor fellow's eye brightened up, and once

filled with tears, as the ladies went, day after day, administering some little comfort and whispering hope to poor Will Harris.

As to hope, Ellen indulged in rather too much hope, and once spoke of "a lodge, perhaps, to keep at Norlands Park," as a thing that might be. This suggestion was not forgotten.

At first, he had some light work at the mill, but, with one arm or two, he could not keep away from the cricket-ground, where he would earn shillings as a practice-bowler, and every one tried to place some earnings within his reach. I never can forget the way the poor stump would stretch out naturally as for a catch, while the ball passed just where the hand ought to be; and then the poor stump would drop, and Will would shake his head, look silent, and bowl away again.

And now, one of the lodge-keepers at Norlands was reported to be dead, and Will came to Ellen quite sanguine, as for a definite promise, of course! He had been to us at least twenty times before; and when it depends on the charity of the Gospel, and the nicer feelings of mercy and equity, to claim a place as for the cripple who can do nothing else, the Parson is always reckoned as the poor man's friend, and the Rectory is "for him that hath none to help him."

This is a kind of homage paid not more to the Rectory than to the Gospel, which it is supposed the Rectory will show in action. And where it does so, that Rectory is worth a thousand arguments for Church establishments. But where the Rector is merged in a kind of squire, it is a pity he should forget that it is in vain to talk "High" Church while he lives like no Church at all.

But as to squires, every year we see more and more friends—true friends of the poor—among them; men who live, more or less, to improve their village as they improve their land. In these cases, among which Col. Kent and Mr. Rochester truly deserve all the honour I can pay them, I count the Hall as another Rectory, another Castle of Defence and House of Refuge and of Right. Still, one great use of the Rectory is to encourage and to give the impulse, as also to uphold the standard for all the Christian families around.

To return, Will Harris's petition I was now to prefer to Lady Oxton; but how to begin I hardly knew. A one-armed man does not look as stylish as a man with two. However, I spoke of my parish, and all my plans and difficulties, and then introduced Will's touching exclamation, "*I shall never play cricket no more!*" and told of Susan Hopkins and her sentimental hopes deferred.

To this episode in real life Lady Oxton lent so ready an ear, that before long, I was offered the lodge. As I said I had a scruple in asking, on account of appearances, her ladyship took fire, and said,—

"Appearances! Why, you have heard of misshapen dwarfs preferred in olden time; and instead of a Flibbertigibbet, how much more Christian to reserve an easy place for a fine fellow like Will Harris—'quite a torso of a man!' Charles Lamb would call him."

That day I had the pleasure of entering, "One couple made happy," among my daily minutes.

It so happened that Lord Fenton, of Rodney Castle, in Yorkshire, was present at luncheon; so, adverting to the curiosity excited about Mrs. Seymour, I asked if he knew the name of Leyland in his county.

"John Woodville Leyland," said he, "is a name that every one in the West Riding knows full well."

"No doubt the father of my friend," I replied: "for her daughter is named Mary Woodville."

"Well, Jack Leyland," he continued, "was the Jack Mytton of our county. He lived at Durwood Hall—lived, that is, when he was at home; but the man was restless and excitable, and lived anywhere but at home. Hunting, racing, and sporting of all kinds he seemed to live for. He spent three fortunes before he died; and what was most to be regretted, about 15,000*l.* trust-money had been all sold out and spent when the party interested came to inquire about it."

"Allow me to ask if his wife survived him, and if he had any family?"

"Oh, no: his wife died some years before him; and his wife's sister, Lady Anna Beauchamp, took care of the only child—and a sweet girl she was—for Jack was not to be trusted with anything but horses and dogs; and the sporting company he kept was always most perplexing to his poor wife. She was a very superior woman. People wondered how she came to marry such a rattling fellow ——"

"Yes," said Lady Oxton; "this was a mistake many a woman has rued for a life. Little do they foresee, that what passes for gaiety and high-spirit at one-and-twenty, threatens a sad self-pleaser, and habits fearfully degrading in a husband, after ten or fifteen years."

"This daughter," said his lordship, "married strangely—contrary to advice—some one whose family did not compare with

hers. I remember so far. She then removed from our neighbourhood, and I lost sight of her altogether."

"Do you know if she had any fortune?"

"I know her mother had property in her own right, and no doubt there was a settlement; but that is all I can tell you."

"Well, Lady Oxton," I said, "it is to me very evident that we now know the history of the interesting Mrs. Seymour. Only she is poor—very poor—that puzzles me; and the Doctor is not at all the kind of man to have run through a wife's money."

Lady Oxton said that the Leylands were connected with the best families in the county, and she saw at a glance that Mrs. Seymour's mind and manners were never formed so exquisitely within the circle of Elkerton or Manton.

Little else passed during this visit. This discovery excited me to such a degree that I hardly knew which to see first—Will Harris, to tell him of his good fortune; or Ellen, to tell the history of Mrs. Seymour. However, I made Will happy without delay, and joined him and Susan together as man and wife a few weeks after.

CHAPTER XXII.

HOW ALL MY PARISH IS BENT ON TRYING FOREIGN PARTS—AND HOW UNCLE BEN AGREED WITH ME ON GETTING CERTAIN WILD YOUTHS OFF OUR HANDS.

And now all my parish had caught the Emigration fever—a movement in which I was doomed to take a part. A shipbuilder in Manton—which stands on a tidal river, seven miles from the sea—had built a ship, and was permitted to name it the "Lady Fenton."

This vessel was soon chartered for Melbourne, and thence to go on to New Zealand, and a grand dinner was given at the launch: speeches were delivered about free market for labour, and a certain fortune for all young people of spirit and of enterprise, till half the heads of all the country round were turned—and turned more especially away from hard work. All the country loons and office clerks expected a full day's pay for half a day's work, and all the young women had been joked about having offers through a speaking-trumpet before they stepped ashore.

When once the fire of enthusiasm was kindled—when once the imagination of the rustics, at first as heavy as the farmyard geese, was fairly on the wing—when hope had snubbed reality, and fancy had given fact "a good set down" for vexatious doubts and dampers—in short, when the emigration schemers had it all their own way, and the shares in the ship were "looking up" and "lively"—then masters and employers found a serious difference in the tone and the temper of their clerks and servants: "they did grow so consequential and independent all at once," that their stomachs actually turned against the customary quantity of humble-pie. "They need not put up with it unless they had a mind" was now a common retort; and—since impudence, and what is called "a proper spirit," are things usually existing as under high pressure in all subordinates—it was now found impossible

by some to resist the soul-stirring satisfaction of throwing down the pen or the scrubbing-brush, and jumping off the stool, or bolting down-stairs, and finding vent for all the temper of a year by speaking out a little of their mind for a few delightful minutes.

Nothing was talked of but the "Lady Fenton," outfits, cabins, pickaxes, and implements of all sorts. Tom and Teddy grew particularly restless. Tom was under John Willis in uncle's office. "And fine work I have had with him," said the clerk. "The fun he taught the whole office to make, in-doors and out, of Mrs. Waldron's breach-of-promise letters—when all he had to do was to copy them—was enough to ruin the most respectable firm in London." Teddy was equally true to his vivacious instincts—larking about the country with the chain and theodolite, under pretence of engineering. So, both these boys hailed the first omen of escape, and magnified "the ills they had," and cried fudge to "the ills they knew not of," and soon asked their father's leave to go.

Uncle Ben had long since made up his mind that these were the very boys for a new country. They had buoyant health, strength, spirits, and energy—qualities which would only lead them into scrapes at home, but which would enable them in a colony to go far ahead of the steady and the slow—those safe pegs and automatons who are so useful in the complicated machinery of the present age in England.

However, their father asked them what they thought they could do in "foreign parts." "Oh!" they said, "it would be so jolly to clear our own land and make our own farm, and perhaps go to the diggings and get nuggets in no time!"

Their father laughed at all this, and said to me that he should only like to give them a week's work at Jacques's farm, or to put ten guineas ten feet deep, and let them try how long they would be getting at it. But Benjamin Austin knew all the time that the success of a colonist depends entirely on the principle that "a cat in a corner is sure to fight;" and just such a corner—a place without escape, where you fight as for your life with all your own unruly powers within and all nature's obstacles without—is a settlement in Australia or New Zealand.

Seymour regarded things in the same point of view. "When I was on the reef in the Gulf of Mexico those four trying days," said the Doctor, "we contrived to distil fresh water from salt with very simple appliances. We mended one boat with nails drawn out from another, and we developed, in other ways, a degree of latent tact and energy, which would make any set of

people comfortable, once landed in New Zealand, or in any other colony that throws them, as if shipwrecked, wholly on their own resources."

"The present state of things in England," said Uncle Ben, "is very hard upon these high-spirited lads. It quite goes to my heart to think of that fine fellow, your brother Tom, and my two boys as well, who—joking apart—are anything but bad ones; to see them cheated out of all the enjoyment of youth, cowed and crushed by John Willis in an office, breathing dust and cobwebs instead of the air of heaven, and seeing the sun but through a skylight, and stuffing their heads with scraps of law or rows of figures all the best years of their lives.—Why, the chances are ten to one against either of them making a fortune till he has spoiled his digestion, shattered his nerves, sharpened his nose, half-blinded his eyes, and hollowed his cheeks past all enjoyment, so that he has to make way for his heirs, executors, or administrators, almost as soon as he has anything worth retiring upon.

"Now, seriously, Harry, you have been bothered enough about your brother Tom, and I am likely to have the same about my Tom and Teddy. It is no use to row and to upbraid them—you may as well storm at the mercury for running up in bright weather, or at some wriggling eels for not lying straight in a basket—so, suppose if we fall in with this emigration scheme, for you and I live in constant hot water from the same cause."

In so saying, Uncle Ben meant quietly to hint to me that Brother Tom was probably in some new scrape at that very moment. This soon proved to be the case.

The next day but one I received a letter from Tom, to say that he really was so sorry to trouble me again with his many peccadillos, that he had determined to help himself; that the 1500*l.* due to him at our mother's death, he had learnt that he could anticipate, and, consequently, he was in communication with "a brick and no mistake," whose advertisement he had often seen in *Bell's Life in London*, and all he wanted was a certain extract from his father's will to effect a sale "of his reversion."

This was not a kind of transaction at which I could look very impassively on. Poor Tom! this "brick and no mistake"—the expression is old as Aristotle, and strictly classical, Τετράγωνος ἄνευ ψόγου—no doubt intended to rob him; and for Tom to be cheated of all his money was much the same thing as to have a claim on some of mine: for, I never could rest if he were ruined.

This "brick," the money-lender, would either buy Tom's reversion for a song, or, perhaps, he was a bill-stealer, and would

obtain his acceptance and sue him at once without paying him a farthing.—One of my friends was defrauded of 400*l.* by this well-known trick.

Accordingly, after a little more emigration-talk with uncle, I set off for London, and inquired, about eight in the evening, for Mr. Thomas Austin, in Buckingham Street, Strand.

"Well, I do think Mr. Austin is at home for once," said the girl; "it isn't very often that he is though, this time of night."

At the same time, not a very steady-looking young man in the passage stared hard at me, and then ran past, two steps at a time, and cried out, breathless,—

"I say, Austin, my good fellow, you must look all correct and proper; for here is some one very like a fellow's governor, with a white choker, coming up-stairs."

Small as was the room, seeming almost full with four persons in it, I could hardly see Tom for the smoke of the cigars.

"Why, Harry!" said my scapegrace brother, "who would have thought of seeing you here?—My brother—I must introduce to you, gentlemen; that is," he said to me as a mock "aside," "they can be *gentlemen* when they try, which is not often.—But, Harry, have a cup of coffee, and you are just in time for a squeeze half-price into the pit—we are off to a new shilling theatre on the Surrey side, to see Charles Farlow's new piece, called "The Humane Footpad, or, the Bloody Nose."

"These two gentlemen," he said, after a while, "are, like me, up here to see London practice; and very sharp practice it is. We had a Chancery suit the other day that died of starvation; it regularly burnt down in the socket—all the fund in dispute had evaporated in fees. But you must not think we are not liberal: the long tic we give would astonish you. Why, there was a young man came about a marriage-settlement the other day, and it turned out that his father had not paid for his marriage-settlement to that very hour!

"The other gentleman is a 'Sawbones.' He is walking the hospital, he is: but it is a precious slow walk; for he spends most nights in the clouds, and doesn't get up till the gas is lighted. If the sun were snuffed out to-morrow, he would not miss it till the dog-days."

Such was Brother Tom's life and company in London.

There is many another Tom Austin in London at this present hour—rash and reckless—with their pure feelings poisoned, like the flowers which some bring from home, by the vicious atmosphere they are doomed to breathe.

Certain positions in London life more or less necessitate vice or degradation of character. I admit that some constitutions, morally as well as physically, will resist influences the most baneful. Still, what can you expect, without virtue positively heroic, where, evening after evening, the choice lies between such company as Tom's, and sitting alone — perhaps without the taste or energy to read — in a comfortless lodging in some back-street in the Strand?

I have a lively, though it is now to me a most painful recollection, of what I saw of this life during a visit to London in my College days.

There was a certain cigar divan with billiard-room, I particularly remember, as well as the characters I met there, which occurs to me as a sample of that society which, with many a youth thrown loose upon the world of London, must replace the family fire-side, and the chastening circle of mother and sisters, whose ear would be shocked with the low talk and the libertine tone of thought and feeling which form the very language and the atmosphere of this demoralising place of resort. I cannot forget the company. One was young Mortlock; he has been very notorious since. Mortlock was well known to every Cambridge man of twenty years' standing — the same who was afterwards transported for firing a pistol at his uncle, who refused his demand for more money, having long since given him up as a hopeless reprobate. Mortlock was a good billiard-player, not more from his execution than his nerve. He was cold and impassive as marble; pale, with a deep but quiet frown: a man marked and quoted for evil deeds.

Another of the company was a young sheriff's officer, whose nickname was Shadrach. His physiognomy bore the strongest marks of the Jew.

One more whom I remember, with some sympathy, was a gentleman-like young man, of an amiable cast of features, who several times evinced a nice sense of honour and a fear of taking some advantage that even the rules allowed. He seemed a favourite with the company, and was received, and evidently flattered, by a salute of butts let drop upon the floor and by shuffling of feet, whenever he appeared. No doubt he paid pretty dearly for this kind of compliment. His name, I think, was Kirton. Some of my friends knew him, and spoke of him with no less interest than pity.

Each London season sees a succession of these unhappy young men, who have just come into about one or two thousand pounds

—a sum which commonly proves worse than nothing, because, while it quickly comes to nothing, it blights all those habits which might have ensured a competency,

Of this kind, was Tom's usual place of resort and evening amusement. Tom was another Kirton, and I did well to snatch him from what, I fear, was Kirton's fate.

Tom's friends—the two clerks and the Sawbones—soon went "to half-price" at the cheap theatre, and left us alone.

"Come, Tom," I said, "I am not going to sermonise; but you must feel that the end of all this is ruin——"

"Now, my dear fellow," he replied, with much feeling, "I do feel it is—feel, that is, sometimes I feel; but cigars and lush stave off these twinges in the night, and all about 'This indenture witnesseth' does not give them a chance all day: but, if you will believe me, Harry, I awake every morning with such a dead weight just here" (pointing to one part of his stomach). "I often think of that poor fellow in the Eddystone lighthouse that Sawbones told me of, who swallowed eight ounces and five pennyweights of lead, as he was gaping up with his mouth open when the lanthorn was on fire."

"Well, well, Tom," I said, "but it is high time to stop you in this downward and desperate career."

"Stop me! But there's no stopping me!" he replied desperately. "I have tried and tried hard—really I have. If I could always keep on thinking, as you can, and thinking as I do think when you are talking to me, it would be all right; but when fellows are all jolly about me, a sort of happy light-headedness comes over me, and there is not as much as half a thought in my part of the parish, till more mischief is done in a day than you could mend in a year—but, how about my reversion of 1500*l.*?"

"We need not talk of that," I replied. "I have a plan to stop—yes, positively—to stop your downfall in another way."

"Really, Harry, I should be glad if you could. I do go down, as you call it—down—down—at such a pace. I often think of Sam Slick's friend, who, in accounting for his tocogony, said that he was once up aloft, but greased his breeches and slid down the rainbow."

And so Tom ran on, half-laughing, half-serious. Indeed, he was too excited for any serious consultation then; but I saw that he would enter readily into my plan next day, and would join with his cousins in their emigration scheme. So, having sounded him on this point, I arranged to meet him the next morning.

The result was, that he agreed to place himself entirely in the hands of me and my uncle, to do as we thought best for him.

I cannot help mentioning, that all Tom could have raised by his reversion of 1500*l.* was 500*l.*, if he were not defrauded even of that. Now the purchase of an equivalent annuity for my mother's life-interest, as effected by us, left him a balance of 1075*l.*—no bad capital for an emigrant with health and strength, and probably a long life before him.

And now the shareholders in the "Lady Fenton" made the most of the news that the Austin family were embarking themselves and fortune in the venture, and the berths were all taken very soon. Mr. Horton had a younger son, "Master Jerry"—so every one called him; but his name was Edwin—and he was allied to what James termed our Argonautic Expedition in quest of the Golden Fleece: that is, of all the money that could be made by the diggings or sheep-farming.

At this time the Canterbury Settlement was all the cry. Anything more ridiculous in the eyes of every experienced colonist, or more tempting in the way it looked upon paper, was never devised. The office for the sale of land was at London, in the Adelphi; and every week a meeting was held, and the latest information given of the state of the colony. No wonder the news seemed good; for Tom says now, that he really believes that all unfavourable letters were stopped, and that this only can account for the fact that his stage of probation and grumbling—all colonists go through a grumbling stage—was doomed never to be chronicled amongst the archives of the Austin family.

However, it was promised that the colony should begin with a fair mixture of ladies and gentlemen (*Colonicè*, "swells"); and that, of the money paid for land, one-third should be applied to the general expenses of the colony, one-third to roads, and one-third reserved for schools and church. As to the last, one bishop went out, but never landed, and no other followed in his place; and one clergyman, who stood first on the list for Church preferment, is, I believe, planting potatoes and shearing sheep to this present hour; and "happy infancy" is afflicted with no more schooling than you would expect where the mother is a maid-of-all work. Indeed the families, I hear, grow up quite as wild as at Milford's farm.

Still, things have, in many respects, shaken pretty well to rights, and few of the colonists could have done as well at home. Yet, I cannot but remember that we all bought our portions of

land on the faith of a goodly and most imposing array of the names of archbishops and bishops among other men of high standing: and, though I do sympathise with the religious credulity that caught at the idea of a Church-of-England Colony—no Dissent—and every man with a certificate of his baptism and credentials from a real clergyman in England to an ideal pastor in New Zealand, yet I cannot but remonstrate against men of high rank and position lending their names to delude, perhaps to their destruction, many good people—when they had not the least guarantee of the good faith of the prospectus which bore their honoured names.

One lady of my acquaintance, I hear, did die of sheer hardship—for, the arrangements promised for all new-comers wholly failed, and the early settlers were landed as if they had been shipwrecked, and some saw their goods and chattels perish in the surf!

The three cousins Austin, therefore, were shipped for New Zealand. The rest of the Manton party embarked for Melbourne and the diggings, or anything else that might seem most inviting when they had landed and had looked about a little.

Mr. Horton did not forget to talk very large about his son, and the interest he had with the Government to insure him some good colonial appointment.

Mr. Horton's pretending to be so grand with his colonial appointment caused no little jealousy, and William Slack, my sexton's brother, who was tired of lath-and-plaster and digging graves, and who had a great desire to find some gold at the bottom of all future pits he might be doomed to dig, said,—

"I'll tell ye what, sir, the Squire's son will try his luck the same as the rest of us; so, they might just as well tell no lies about the matter."

What Mr. Horton's colonial appointment ended in we shall hear all in good time.

Brother Tom spent a fortnight with us before he sailed, and the ingenuity of Ellen and Mrs. Seymour, as well as of my poor mother, who never expected to see her boy again, and who was very low-spirited all the time, was tasked exceedingly to discover something most valuable in a settler's life, though the outfitting warehouse provided a list of requisites to jog our memory, by no means small.

The Doctor's advice was, to "victual him well on board ship, and to make sure that he landed in good condition."

My mother thought of needles and thread, and thimble, with

sticking-plaster in case he cut his hands while awkward with his tools! This was an excellent idea, and did the good lady's sagacity great credit. She also thought of pills and cough-lozenges, with most anxious inquiry about my ordering him plenty of flannel waistcoats; nor must I omit to mention, that she made an oilskin case for his Bible and Prayer-book.

After this last touching feature in the good mother's character, I must leave the reader to his own imagination to fill up the rest of the inventory of Brother Tom's outfit.

CHAPTER XXIII.

HOW MR. SHARK GETS DOWN IN THE WORLD WHILE MRS. SHARK GETS UP, AND HOW THE SHARPEST PRACTITIONERS ARE SOMETIMES OUTWITTED.

AND now I must continue the history of Mrs. Shark and her lawsuit with her recreant spouse.

For two years Mrs. Shark had been our visitor—a very long time, indeed, to bear with an "impulsive female," and often in her most impulsive moments. But real trials always fall short of our sad forebodings—there is so much in daily life to break the blow, to deaden the feelings, or divert the mind; and, besides Ellen's illness, we had measles in the house once, and scarlatina once, besides hooping-cough. All this caused a break, and sometimes made Mrs. Shark an acquisition. Then Tom had to be fitted out for New Zealand—this also made a diversion; and, at least once a-month, we were all in a fever of excitement about some great move in this game of fox-and-goose—so Uncle Ben called the present proceedings, for, stop his jokes he would not: but Mrs. Shark was so gratified by the interest he took in her affairs, that she agreed all his naughtiness should go for nothing.

The danger, I said, was, that Mr. Shark might go abroad the moment he felt hard pressed. And one day we were in great alarm at hearing that Messrs. Tinley could not find him to serve a process. Uncle Ben was, happily, in London, and his ready invention unkenneled Mr. Shark in four-and-twenty hours. The device was this:—

Mr. Shark's letters were to be addressed for Winsom to forward. Now Winsom's nearest post-office was at a certain chemist's shop; so my uncle wrote letters in coloured envelopes, and recognised these letters directed in full by Winsom, while spread out upon the counter for the postman to stamp.

Having thus marked his bird down, his next step was to go

to the Office of Private Inquiry, and employ a detective to keep a watch on all his movements. The result was, after having filed a bill in equity against Mr. Shark, we were soon in a position to swear that we believed he intended to leave the kingdom before the conclusion of the suit; and, by a writ of *ne exeat*, he would have been committed to prison had he not given surety for his appearance.

Mr. Shark was now in an awkward position. He had one suit in Chancery and four several actions at common law. There was one suit to compel him to make an allowance, and four suits brought in the names of tradesmen to make him pay her bills till he did so.

But, where was the ready money to defend these suits?—Happily for the ends of justice, the Sharks of Society are themselves the dupes of the same vices which make them dangerous to others. Drunkenness and reckless extravagance of all kinds render them a very poor match for the prudent and the wise, and no one knew better than Winsom the spendthrift habits of his client.

Winsom was a man with all the powers of his mind warped to cunning and wary love of gain—the very last man to feel anything but contempt for a client coming into his office all cloudy with smoking, and flushed with last night's debauch, to consult, perhaps, on some critical movement in his perilous position. He would naturally say, "This man is too much of a fool to succeed as a knave; they will surely get the better of him: so, without money on account, I will not move an inch."

Of course, this sharp practitioner did everything to gain time. If he must throw over his client like a squeezed orange, well: but he would make the suit last as long as he could. Our solicitor was no match for Winsom in this respect—the one would take every advantage to overstand the last day of the law-term, the other was too respectable to do so. Then Winsom thought that a little might be squeezed out of the Irish tenants; but this did not amount to much when he came to try Paddy, armed already with an excuse.

The contest had now come to this. Here was an estate of 800*l.* a-year, and neither party could draw much of the rents. And though, with the least appearance of fair conduct on the part of the husband, any court would have awarded him part and the wife the rest; yet, by leaving a lady of fortune so soon after marriage in utter destitution, without a shadow of excuse, he was so certain to excite the indignation of the court, that Winsom

saw little encouragement to risk his own money for so poor a chance.

And now we had judgment on four different suits, brought in the names of Mrs. Shark's milliners and other tradespeople; and Uncle Ben—finding that Winsom ventured no action against the Irish tenants for the rents—said he was sure that the game was nearly up, and all Winsom stood out for was money enough to pay his bill.

Accordingly, Uncle Ben suggested a compromise, as the only means of saving another year, at least, of litigation.

At the idea of a compromise, Ellen was very indignant. "The money," she said, "was all Mrs. Shark's: so, why give up a farthing to such wicked people? For her part, she would cheerfully take care of the injured wife another year, rather than right should not be right, and the victory not be complete."

However, Uncle Ben, like other lawyers, was not used to victories quite so decisive. No men distrust medicine as much as doctors; no men hope as little as lawyers from law. Besides, he had had enough of it, and was much money out of pocket, which money he would rather draw from Mrs. Shark than from me. So, he suggested that there might be faults on both sides. "Certainly," he said, "I myself never could have lived with Mrs. Shark. She does keep such a thorough draught through my ears, it is enough to give me a cold in my head: so, I cannot wonder her husband could not stand it—and who can tell what sort of defence might come out in court?"

But Mrs. Shark would not hear of any compromise. She followed on the same side as Ellen. She was "a woman of spirit, and by no means tired out yet."—No; it was for me to be tired out.—"And as to Winsom, he was as bad as his client, and she had no notion of helping to pay such a swindler's bill. Besides, it was Winsom who had aided and abetted in selling out that 800*l.* stock, for which she was sole trustee, as her late husband's executrix, and was induced to sign a power to sell the stock, supposing it to be a power only to receive the dividends."

"What! what!" said Uncle Ben; "do you really know what you are talking about? But—but—what a blockhead I have been all this time! Surely this can't be; at least, you never told me this before."

"Perhaps not," said Mrs. Shark. "But you seem astonished. What can it matter who sold out the stock, now the money is all spent and gone?"

"Matter! Mrs. Shark? It may matter a great deal," said the

lawyer. "But—I cannot believe it: let me cross-examine you rigidly as to the sale of that stock. It was a manifest breach of trust—you had only at the time a right to the interest."

Every one knows how a lawyer fishes for truth, often making the witness for the first time aware of the meaning of the words he uses.

In a few minutes it appeared that no stockbroker was employed by Mr. Shark, but all was done by Winsom—that Winsom sent down a Power to sell—that Mrs. Shark executed this, and saw it afterwards directed back to Winsom: also that Winsom forwarded the proceeds of the sale through Meadows's bank.

The lawyer's eyes brightened at every word of this, and he anxiously inquired if Mrs. Shark had any letters to show.

The lady believed she had.—Of course there was the usual delay in finding, and confusion in sorting, and narrow escape in not burning "these odious papers long ago,"—but at last they came to hand, and Uncle Ben snatched, and opened, and crackled, and threw aside all that were irrelevant with truly lawyer-like facility. At last he got up from his chair with four or five precious documents between his fingers, and said, "Now just give me five minutes to myself."—People are wonderfully obedient on such occasions; and we waited nervously watching his nodding head, opening eyes, arched brows, screwed-up mouth, and other signs of the verdict to be delivered. At last Uncle Ben broke silence,—

"Capital! Nothing could be better! This account of the transfer shows—a balance of an old account due to Winsom being deducted—that Winsom had a beneficial interest in this breach of trust—indeed, by implication, he seems trustee of the fund. Then this letter, as explained by Mrs. Shark's oath, will show he connived at deceiving her into the sale. And this letter shows—but you won't understand me—suffice it to say, Mrs. Shark, that no man of Winsom's character can meet this case in open court—he is answerable for every farthing of this 800*l.*; and I shall instruct Tinley to proceed forthwith."

"Yes; but no doubt it is all spent," said Mrs. Shark.

"Never mind that," said the lawyer: "we demand it of Winsom; he may recover it of his client as he pleases. You admit they are a couple of swindlers—one as bad as the other?—It is only the help of the Winsoms that encourages the malpractices of the Sharks. Had Shark applied to a man like Tinley, you would have been free from your bad bargain on fair and equitable terms long ago."

The reader has now heard enough of the detail and the legal minutiæ of this affair.

"Never," said Mr. Tinley, "in my professional experience, has there been a case in which a roguish lawyer and client were so completely outwitted."

For, first of all, the 800*l.* stock was demanded of Winsom, and that too in a way which showed him that Tinley would move for his name to be struck off the rolls if he refused. So, finding that nothing but expense and exposure could result from standing out in so clear a case against such a firm as Tinleys—one of the first in London—Winsom forthwith replaced the stock, with small chance, indeed, of Shark's ever repaying him the money.

And now Mrs. Shark's attendance in London was requested by Messrs. Tinley, that she might be on the spot to consult, or to execute deeds, as occasion might require. The way that Mrs. Shark employed her leisure time during six weeks she now spent in town, would, I think, be incredible to the oldest practitioner.

Mrs. Shark was a shrewd and clever woman. All the odds and ends of law which she picked up crystallized in her mind, into all the consistency of well-arranged and available information, though she kept her own counsel as to the use she made of it.

No sooner did Tinley report that Winsom had replaced the 800*l.* stock in Mrs. Shark's name, than I went with Mrs. Shark and Uncle Ben to hold a consultation at Tinley's office in Lincoln's Inn.

It was soon agreed, that since Winsom could be in no mood to pay more money, now was the time to arrest Shark for the tradesmen's bills. And now a very singular piece of legal practice on the part of a lady appeared to astonish even the gentlemen of the law, as will now appear:—

"There are four writs issued," said Mr. Tinley.

"No—six, I believe," said his managing clerk.

"It can be but four," replied the master.

"I understand that there really are six writs," rejoined the man.

"Can any one explain this?" said Mr. Tinley. "I remember, two milliners, one linen-warehouse, and the Sponsalia shop; and these I certainly thought were all."

"Oh," said Mrs. Shark, "I don't wonder you are puzzled! But, you see, I thought I would help a little in the way of lawsuits myself. There was a deal of delay in bringing him to the point, and it was 'very slow bowling,' as they say at Elkerton; so I thought I would just quicken his paces; and, having nothing to

do—now, Mr. Tinley, you must not be offended at this interference of mine — I stepped into the office of a solicitor near my lodgings, and sent Mr. Shark a couple of writs extra on my own private account."

The laughter and surprise caused by this lady-client, and her ready device for quickening the paces of a tricky defendant, will never be forgotten while Tinleys' is a firm.

All this time a deed had been discussed, and was now actually drawn, to assign the estates to me, in trust, to pay all rents to Mrs. Shark, as before her marriage, provided the husband was indemnified against all existing and all future bills.

And now Mr. Shark was taken into custody, and accommodated with apartments at one of these ugly-looking houses with iron bars before the windows, near Chancery Lane—a kind of half-way house, and foretaste of a gaol in the distance.

And what was his alternative?

Either to go to gaol for his wife's bills, or to release her estates, of which he could no longer touch the rents!

Never did a poor wretch look more truly pitiable. What a fall! — from the popular preacher, free of all the parties and supper-tables of Manton — and then from Cullen Court, of which he was the master — down to the spunging-house; where I saw him, pale and sottish, with a clay pipe in his mouth, and a pot of porter by his side, steeping his misery in liquor and in smoke!

What could he do? His one and only chance was to fight for the Irish rents, and play a waiting game in Chancery till he tired us out. But all this required money from Winsom, who was indeed held in check by the galling loss of 800*l.* consols.

On the evening of that day he signed the deed, giving up to Mrs. Shark all her property, save the ready money and proceeds of the furniture; which, of course, were gone. However, in a few months the tenant-for-life of the 800*l.* consols died, and Mrs. Shark was once more in easy and independent circumstances, with cash at command, not only a richer, but a wiser woman.

She did not return to Elkerton for some months, but went to enjoy her victory at Leamington with an aunt and some cousins, who were as happy to side with the winner as they had before been to keep clear of the loser in this eventful contest.

CHAPTER XXIV.

HOW THE RECTOR BRINGS HIS BEST FRIENDS INTO THE DEEPEST TROUBLE — THE CLOUD IS ABOUT TO BREAK — A MYSTERY — AN ALARM — A SURPRISE — SAD HISTORY OF A BELLE — THE MYSTERY SOLVED — AND THE READER HEARS SOMETHING, WE HOPE, GREATLY TO HIS ADVANTAGE.

It has often been a question with me, whether two or three troubles are really more trying than one; because each forms a kind of diversion to the other.

For, now the number of my troubles was reduced, but my anxiety seemed only concentrated. Brother Tom was provided for in New Zealand; our house was no longer encumbered with Mrs. Shark; nor was my mind harassed by those adverse turns of the law which might have made her a burthen for life. My mother's affairs, also, were settled; for, old Mrs. Farley was dead, and her estate in course of being realized; but, Mr. Seymour's horse was still in my stable, and every day made me deeply sensible that the Doctor's practice was less, and his circumstances painfully straitened.

A great deal of information passes through the lower orders. The servants who stand behind your chair, or the maid who fingers her mistress's notes, or overhears the talk in the garden from an open window, are all clever in dove-tailing pieces of information together, and drawing inferences. Having nothing but idle gossip to occupy their minds, anything as important as the disgrace of the doctor or the misdeeds of the parson they are sure to circulate in the kitchen, almost as soon as it has been dropped in the parlour.

James Slack, my clerk, was a shrewd, clever fellow in his way, and was always ready with a little quiet advice — "Seeing, sir," he would say, "I have lived more years in this place than you have, and I know the ways of people pretty well by this time."

One day Slack said, "Isn't it a pity, sir, that men who have

their bread to get should mix themselves up with things, as if they were rich?—Now, only see what our Doctor has come to!"

"No harm, I hope," I replied: "but let me hear the whole story."

"That tea-and-cake meeting in the school, ever so long ago, and the magic lanthorn that made the boys laugh so, was pounds out of his pocket in the way of fees and physic, to begin with."

"Why so, Slack?"

"Because, sir, it showed his heart was in it. And the public-house people—that is Higgins, and Cave the farmer, and the people at the mill—are all one clique, and they want beer sold and not tea. So, since they couldn't hurt you, they paid off the Doctor for helping. Besides, sir, this move wasn't like true blue: it wasn't Tory-like—leastwise, so the beer-and-malt people ruled it: and, that is a sure way to bring the whole party to cry down any man. Most people are wide awake to that who keep shop at Manton."

"Is that all, Slack?"

"Well, that, sir, he might have got over; but then came your Bribery sermon, and the Doctor and his wife were so much about the Rectory, it seemed as if they liked it; and then it was the Doctor who came in their way again with old Stubbs when he cut his throat. They were ashamed of that perjury job, sir—all the party were—and the sight of the Doctor made them feel worse than ever!"

"Then this filled up the measure of the good man's offences, eh?"

"Why, not altogether, sir. Hasn't he had anything to do with that help that you gave to the *Herald?* Whether or not, sir, the Doctor and his lady are so much about the Parsonage, that what you do they are supposed to do; and—if I may make so bold—your acquaintance hasn't done him any good at all. Your money backs you up: so, you are safe, sir, all but the subscriptions: and then, you can afford to lose a trifle; but when every penny depends on other people ——. However, you don't understand, sir; you think that they have his physic and he has their money, and so far quits: but they want more than that—they must have ever so much more out in impudence and conceit, and such a sight of homage—you wouldn't believe it, sir.—Why, bless you, sir, a Manton man doesn't keep a tongue or a thought, but is all put into his business—that's the way they keep their customers."

Here was, indeed, a confirmation of my ideas of the curse of party-spirit; "of the animosities engendered," as Sir Robert Peel

said; "the more bitter, as the circle is narrow within which it is confined." "The mortification of a defeat lasts from one election to another." Then, the party-cry is an ever-ready lash for the worthy; and, as to liberty of conscience and a conscientious vote —shops are opened as Whig or Tory by calculation, and while the poor man's vote is sold for pounds, the vote of the richer is sold for customers. And Seymour was a man whose soul was vexed from day to day with all the iniquity he was doomed to behold; and though a quiet vote on the Tory side had hitherto cost him nothing, yet, now he was identified with me, a spark of suspicion was kindled, which little Fogwell, and small-souled practitioners in the same line, lost no time in blowing to a flame.

This conversation with James Slack alarmed me greatly. Every remark and every little incident that told of the poverty of the Seymours made me feel very guilty, while it stung Ellen to the quick.

Little Mary Seymour was continually with us: her tone of temper, and quiet grace, and composure of character, being no slight acquisition to our children. Mary Seymour was the only child I ever knew rationally brought up. I mean in this respect —the child would accept no presents. The child had been used not only to say "No," but to resist: and, instead of her childhood being, as is too commonly the case, the seed-time of selfish, piggish habits, she had been trained to feel the pleasures of self-denial, and of a soul set free beyond the sphere of self.

Herein the mother's *forte*—we were soon to learn—was stamped upon the child.

Time went on, and week after week some sifting question from the Horton party, or some pretended condolence from Lady Newcome's, proved more and more clearly that every step in the downfall of the Seymours was noted and gloated over with cruel delight. But, things at last seemed coming to a fatal crisis.

One day, when Mary had alluded, in all simplicity, to the room "where mamma does her ironing," and Martha had brought home some more painful news, Ellen could resist no longer, but went to offer substantial assistance to her friend; saying, that as we were fairly responsible for having led the Doctor on to his loss, we could not endure even to think of Mrs. Seymour toiling with only one servant.

Mrs. Seymour smiled with an air, not of resignation, but of triumph and of victory—there seemed a little heroism in her manner. She quietly remarked, that while it was the motive that ennobled the employment, she could assure us that she had

no duty to perform more unpleasant than she had often undertaken in her father's garden or conservatory quite as a pastime.

"But," said Ellen, with a heart overflowing with emotion, "you must, my dear Mrs. Seymour, consider that the poor assistance which we can render, you may most honourably accept. Think only of what I have myself endured in days gone by—think what I have been delivered from—and then say, could I rest without exulting in the opportunity of venting my feelings of thankfulness on you?"

Mrs. Seymour regarded Ellen steadily with looks of a fond and endearing interest, and at length said, very calmly, but with a little hesitation, and quite thoughtfully,—

"I fully appreciate your kind feeling—a feeling in unison with your own Christian character; but I can assure you that my burthen is not more than I can bear; and, though I would say more—indeed your kindness claims the greatest confidence—still, you can hardly enter into my peculiar feelings—I mean, that my position is peculiar. I feel painfully that your sympathy claims a very different reply: but you know, dear, how trying it is to be swayed at once by feelings wholly opposite—by duties difficult—most difficult—to reconcile."

We were now—when Ellen returned to talk over the result of her proffered kindness—more perplexed than ever.—What could that mean? Were we mistaken? Here was a character at once most ingenuous, yet most reserved; most friendly, yet—could it be?—most distrustful; capable of the utmost benevolence in herself, yet too proud—what else could it be?—to receive any assistance even from those who had positively been the cause of her distress.

All that day we talked, and thought, and guessed,—we put together all that we could recollect in conversations past with Mrs. Seymour, but still our consultation ended as it had begun.

"Well," said Ellen to me, "Mrs. Seymour always has been a mystery, and now she is more inexplicable than ever."

After this interview six months passed away, during which the affairs of the Doctor seemed to grow worse and worse. The fact that I kept his horse and lent him mine was known, and much discussed. This damaged him in two ways. It not only identified him still more with that unpopular "meddling marplot of a Parson," but it also shook his credit with the town and trade of Manton.

Horton's power and will to persecute were but too well known

to every tradesman; and, that any country doctor could find a living beneath the malignant aspect of Horton Hall was deemed a thing impossible. The Doctor was naturally obliged to take credit: he always paid when he was paid, and lived on credit one year under the other; and, latterly, he had told the tradesmen—and this caused many remarks—that he should try their indulgence a little further than was customary, but they might charge him what interest they pleased.

Here was another puzzle—If the Doctor had money, why not draw upon it? if he had none, could he really forfeit the good opinion of his friends, and stoop to mean, dishonest ways?

By this time, six months more had gone; and John Willis called one morning to tell me that the cloud that so long had hung over Mr. Seymour must soon break—that hints had been thrown out to make his creditors anxious; and, what was worse, that Ivy Cottage had been taken by a new doctor, to be supported by all the Conservative interest which could be brought to bear upon his practice: so that for tradesmen to trust to the future prospects of the Seymours was now wholly out of the question.

This came upon us as a heavy blow, indeed. Ellen was overcome, as by the greatest misfortune of her life. In the midst of our dismay and self-reproach for being so thoughtless of the fortunes of our friends, Uncle Ben came in with news that certainly did not mend the matter: for, his first words were,—

"Now, Harry, Harry, you 'have been and done it,' as the saying is, and 'no mistake.' You have finished poor Seymour—sold him up downright.—This is just like you parsons. You think you can attack a hornets' nest, and avoid each and all of five hundred stings. I knew their restless spite and malice would reach you somewhere; and so they have, in the sorest point of all. Oh, dear me! Alas! poor Seymour!—So it has fallen upon him!—But that man is gone mad, in my opinion. Why, the poorer he is, the more bumptious he is. I never saw such a fellow. Why, he actually began the war!—The moment he heard that Horton had reflected on his credit, he sent Horton in his bill—a precious long one.—Horton owes him a three-years' account—about eighty pounds,—and he has demanded payment by Wednesday, 'to save further proceedings,' though that sum will go but a short way to pay Seymour's debts. The best of the joke is, Horton is very short of money, and of credit too, to my certain knowledge: so this countermove is the most stinging that Seymour could adopt."

Ellen came in, and was overwhelmed with grief, exclaiming,

what could they do? Mrs. Seymour, she feared, would accept no aid; but now, regard for her husband's safety might alter her strange resolution.

"Husband's safety!" said Uncle Ben. "My dear child, that is compromised already—for, his goods and chattels, and gallipots and all, will be sold off in a month."

"What! and all those presents,"—said Ellen, thoughtfully, "and all those pretty ornaments;—yes, and all the relics of more happy days!—Oh, dear! oh, dear! has she no friends?—Can nothing be done to save her?"

"Friends are a scarce commodity at times like these," said my uncle; "and with her, I should think, particularly few and far between: for, when a fine lady marries out of her circle, you don't know how unforgiving are those dear relatives who calculate on a good match—good for themselves as well as her—with high connexions, country-house, hunting, shooting, London season, and all the many little *douceurs* for which a poor girl is bought and sold in fashionable life."

In a fortnight from this time we heard that Seymour's creditors, having held a meeting, were about to send a deputation to say that they could wait no longer, and would trust no more. "In short," said John Willis, "where the poor lady is to order the next leg of mutton I don't know; and the impudence of these people, now they dare to speak out, is shocking to think of."

Ellen could now refrain no longer. Without waiting for her usual attire, but arranging her mantle as she went, she had disappeared down the garden in a minute, and was very quickly at Mrs. Seymour's door.

"I saw it was you, dear," said Mrs. Seymour, cheerfully, as she met her at the steps. "But, dear me! what is the matter? Those cheeks marked with tears, and that kind heart too full to speak! Come, come, sit down. What has happened? What can I do to assist you?—My dear Ellen, I cannot endure to think of this—pray be composed, and let me see what I can do to dry your tears and end your sorrows!"

"Assist me!" said Ellen, with much emotion. "Assist yourself, dear Mrs. Seymour; or, rather, let me assist you. For months I have been unhappy on your account, and now, these rude, unfeeling people, of whom I have heard this morning——"

"Poor creatures! I pity them—that is all, dear—they don't know any better—indeed they do not. This does not disturb me; though I am, indeed, rather perplexed just now by something incidental to their importunity. Two courses are open to me, and I

cannot quite decide on either: so, I was in a very meditative mood when you passed the blinds.—Really, the spokesman of the party hesitated, and was nervous, and seemed half sorry for his mission when he had come; for, I was very polite to them.—You know, dear, I can be *very* polite when I try; and I think I did try—with my very best manners. This was very wicked of me, I know you will say; for, I really made the poor men feel very uncomfortable."

"Yes, yes, dear," said Ellen, "I know your fortitude; I know how light you can make of serious troubles: but, you have confessed you are perplexed, and it is because you are perplexed that I would—indeed I must—invite your confidence, that I may help ——"

Here Mrs. Seymour drew back, and paused, and seemed as if in doubt what to reply for the moment. At length she said,—

"You do indeed deserve my fullest confidence; but, while you must see there is something that requires explanation, how to act at this moment is, indeed—I do admit—most perplexing. Sometimes your kindness almost brings me to the point, but ——" and here she paused, as if deep in thought.

This Ellen thought a reason for proceeding, and said,—

"Pray, don't be offended, Mrs. Seymour. I should not be your friend if I now concealed that I know full well the affluence in which you once lived. Indeed—I may as well say at once—that Mr. Austin, some time since, heard from Lord Fenton all about your father and his family in Yorkshire."

"My father!" said Mrs. Seymour, with a sudden start of surprise, and almost of alarm.

"Yes, dear," said Ellen. "Sir Woodville Leyland, was it not?—And it is the knowledge of this that makes me doubly anxious, because I know all about him. So now be easy: you are, I hope, spared the trouble of explaining.—Really we were not curious: the history was told us quite accidentally: but—being told—perhaps it may be now in my power to relieve your present perplexity."

"All—all—about my father?" said Mrs. Seymour, as if weighing every word, while her eyes filled with tears.—"You say you heard *all?*"

Poor Ellen now became quite frightened; and, what with the bad news which brought her there, and the alarm she felt now, lest she should have shocked the feelings of her friend—she knew not where she was.

But, after a pause, Mrs. Seymour said,—

"My dear Ellen, I am much afraid that your kind anxiety has been very long protracted, owing to a very groundless, though a most natural, fear on my part.—You say you know *all* about my father?"

"Yes, dear; I did hear that he ran through his fortune, and perhaps that may be the cause of your present difficulties;—indeed, your looks say, Yes.—Never mind my knowing it—it is but a thrice-told tale, amidst the changes and chances of this life."

"Stay, dear!" said Mrs. Seymour, slowly and calmly: "you say you heard that my father ran through *his* fortune?—Did you hear anything more?"

Ellen now was silent. The painful history of the young lady, whose fortune he had also spent, rushed into her mind, and she soon answered, "*Yes:* but, let me not add to your trouble by any unpleasant allusion.—Oh, how unhappy I have been! Really—were it not for my anxiety for your present relief, I would not, indeed, have added to your perplexity."

"Add to my perplexity! My dear Ellen, you little know that you have touched the very spring that sets me free—this, on consideration, I am sure you have done—free, I really believe, from all this morning's perplexity. Know, then, it is easy to assist me. Regard for my poor father's name alone prevented me from receiving such assistance before. I have submitted, for his sake, to years of self-denial; but the term of my probation, as I call it, is all but ended; though the severity of it—doubtless for a wise and merciful purpose—has been made truly trying at last. However, now it will be easy to raise—as Mr. Seymour has long suggested—such a sum as may enable us to anticipate our year of jubilee, and our day of happy deliverance.—But I cannot rest—before, with my own early history, I have set before you a more favourable view of that error of my poor father, which I have lived twelve years to redeem; therefore"—and this Mrs. Seymour said under very strong emotion—"if you will excuse me for a very few minutes, when I return I will tell you all."

Mrs. Seymour then left Ellen alone. Indeed, the surprise and the pain of finding that others knew the sad history she had laboured to conceal (though some explanation was necessary to enable her to find relief from pecuniary embarrassment), this caused a shock which it took some little time to recover.

At length Mrs. Seymour returned, and after such looks and words of sympathy and mutual congratulation, as may be better imagined than expressed, Ellen's ears were gladdened by the following story:—

"You have heard that my father was a man of open heart and open hand, and one of the most popular, as a generous, high-spirited man, in the whole county. You will not be surprised that my dear mother should have been as much captivated by these manly qualities, and as much blinded to the want of prudence, self-denial, and strong principle, as other ladies; and you will not be disposed to doubt that she was—notwithstanding her injudicious choice—a woman of true religious feeling, and very far superior to the ladies of her day.

"Not long after marriage my mother found her home a Castle-rack-rent, and filled with the noisiest and the wildest even of those who live only for hunting and the sports of the field.

"All this went on till I was nearly twenty years of age, by which time my dear mother had one unceasing struggle to keep me away from the attentions, or to warn me against the character, of the young men who found open house with my father.

"My mother was ill for nearly six months before she died, and during that time she did her utmost to open my eyes to the horror of life without religion. She was ever enforcing the great truth, that the world of fact called for self-sacrifice and self-denial, though the world of fashion conspired to lead us in a diametrically opposite direction.—'Life in earnest' was ever on her lips. 'To do and to conquer;' to set your mind on noble objects, and pursue them unto the end; and that duty, progress, and success in worthy courses, were the only source of daily satisfaction;—this was her constant theme: while she warned me that a round of pleasure only loosened the strings of the human lyre, and destroying all zest and power of enjoyment, left the heart and affections an utter wreck—'dead while he liveth.'

"It was evident my mother spoke feelingly on this point; and there was quite enough in the history of the dissipated lives and the fashionable marriages in the families around to teach by warning as well as precept.

"After my mother's death, even my father himself could hardly pretend that his establishment was a safe or proper place for me. On that point much must ever remain unsaid. So, I lived with my aunt, entitled to about 1500*l.* a-year, under a settlement, at my father's death.

"This aunt was very different from my dear mother. Her life was a round of gaiety, as it is called; but, in reality, of languor and *ennui*, without the spirits to be gay. For one season I was with her in London, and did, indeed, feel the truth of my mother's words. At first, I was intoxicated by the glare and

excitement of fashionable parties, operas, and balls; but gradually they pleased me less and less, as I lost the strength to enjoy them; and by the end of the season I was wretched when in company, but only more wretched—craving for that excitement which had displaced all natural stimulus—when at home.

"All this time, I heard no little of the profligacy of those I was doomed to meet; and reflection made me think again and again, 'What would my dear mother say now?'

"But a round of dissipation kept me in a kind of whirl. I was giddy,—indeed intoxicated. My mind appeared to have lost its nerve, and tone, and power. An effort or a resolve wanted more energy than I possessed. If saved at all, it must be by some power from without. I must be snatched and torn away, and then restored to a state to think. I was no longer the same person; my taste and feelings were impaired, and I felt constantly peevish, irritable, and discontented, as if life were a burthen.—The simple reason was, that my whole system was exhausted, and all the harmony of my nature, for the time, destroyed.

"But now, it was ordained that something should check my desperate and downward course: for, at the end of the season, my health gave way, and the physician ordered me to go to the sea-side, declaring that another such a season would be death.

"My aunt took a house on the West Cliff at Brighton, and morning after morning I used to recline in my wheel-chair, and drink in the delicious breezes—but only delicious after a time; and I used to enjoy—but that also was only after a time—the cheering sunshine, the soothing sound of the rippling waves, and all those inexhaustible pleasures of nature which the blighting spell and the deadly sorcery of that Great Magician, Dissipation, had, for a time, deprived me of all healthful vitality to taste.

"Every morning, at the same hour, I used to see a young lady, of about twenty-three years of age, moved from one part of the beach to another, on a kind of reclining board upon wheels, on which she was supported by pillows, being too weak to sit up. An elderly gentleman and lady were usually walking up and down, looking very melancholy, with just a word of tenderness as they passed their interesting daughter.

"I soon saw, by the glance which she cast upon me, that she thought it unnecessary we should keep asunder; and in a few days she had told me the helpless nature of her complaint, as also the lamentable cause.

"She was the only and the idolised child of Admiral and Mrs. St. Aubyn, who, delighted and flattered by the attentions which

their very beautiful daughter received, had led her, for three seasons, through one ceaseless round of dissipation at Bath, with an occasional excursion for some ball at Cheltenham, or at one of the meetings in the county.

"Nature gave way. She was now in a rapid decline; and I happened to hear that—at the next of those Annual Fancy Balls, at which Miss St. Aubyn had been three times the pride of the room—six of her once favourite partners in the dance, from feelings of propriety, could not attend, having been summoned but two days before—it was her dying request, intended as a solemn warning to six thoughtless young men,—to bear her pall at her funeral.

"Poor dear young creature! She had not the blessing of a wise mother like mine. She had early read the Book of Fashion for the Book of Life, and had but little, indeed, to fall back upon.

"My health and strength were soon restored by quiet and repose; and for three months I was blessed with, indeed, a noble sphere for my energies, in kindling the latent fire in one neglected heart.

"It is commonly said that nothing is more improving than teaching another. This is true, both of heart and mind. But I was in a position the most favourable for true wisdom in another way. I was also to be taught by my invalid friend. Wasting strength, and the gradual extinction of all the cravings and interests of this life, leave the soul free from diversion to assert its own essential truth, and to show its own spark of ethereal fire.

"She one day said to me, 'There is nothing like sickness to bring a person to their sober senses. The fascination of the ball-room, and all the glare and tinsel, which you depicture as the mere scenery of a drama, worthy only to amuse for an idle hour—this has formed a material part of my whole life. I can never remember myself but as a spoilt child,—and the little belle of the child's dance; and thence early introduced to all society, I have been the centre of all eyes and all attentions. I have lived for Self. I have known no pleasures that did not begin and end and centre all in Self; and oh! how unsatisfying, how cloying, how insipid have been my days! What a state of unrest!—'Would it were evening! would it were morning!' And now you tell me that the secret of life is sacrifice; that none love themselves so unwisely as the selfish; and that, just as music has no charms but for a correct ear, so life is all discord but for chastened hearts!

"'But what is the version of the Gospel that I have always heard? Why, suffering for suffering's sake, and self-denial, only to be miserable.—Who were the persons so often recommended to me as religious? The morbid, the unsympathetic, the unloving, the unkind, and the censorious!

"'And now you give me another version, true to the feelings of my own heart. Self-denial, for the good of others, while, in another's happiness you find your own—denying the less for the more worthy feeling—enjoying pleasure, but as a recreation for noble duties—living to do God's will, trusting myself to His guidance—seeking truth or the true life, in all positions, and discerning the life *true* to our feelings and affections—true to our present sphere, no less than to our future destiny, as distinguished from the *false* and unsatisfying life the thoughtless lead;—in one word, living in the very character and spirit of my Saviour, who disclosed a higher life; an eye for new beauties, an ear for new truths, a heart for new feelings—all as superior to what I have experienced, as are the trifles of the child or the appetites of the animal to the taste and pleasures of beings of a pure and exalted nature.

"'Think, dear Miss Leyland, what must be my present feelings. My life has been a dream: now I am awake to realities! My Saviour, you say, was always dwelling upon *truth*. Indeed, I understand you now. My life has been a lie; it has been a delusion,—chasing shadows for substance. It seems as if I had lived among the maniacal and the insane, and that now I have been rescued: and life lies before me, as you explain it, in the clear light of truth, and sense, and soberness.'

"It was now time for Miss St. Aubyn to return to Bath; and it was among the trials of my life that I could not go, too, with this interesting young creature, and trace the rays of truth stealing upon the dark shades of error—to trace the yearnings of the soul for a higher life, spurning away the things of sense as childish things—and thus to watch her progress to the grave.

"When I was just twenty-four years of age, and was already twitted by all my circle as to whether I really had made a vow of single-blessedness, my father was taken seriously ill; and it was soon declared that a few months would, probably, end his wild and intemperate existence. He was from this time confined to his bed-room; and, such was his malady, that a nurse was required both day and night; and, though all his days he had been one of the most impatient and despotic of husbands or of masters, yet, now he lay at the mercy of one old woman, de-

pendent on her caprice and temper as much as any helpless child. —He tried one or two changes; but the nurse who could most skilfully relieve his acute sufferings felt too secure of her place to be at all under his command.

"In this state he lay for six months: and, now that the house was no more troubled by his sporting acquaintance, I rode over to see him nearly every day, and at last I returned to Durwood as my home.

"It was then that I became acquainted with Mr. Seymour, our medical attendant. All the neighbourhood bore testimony to his life of charity, and it was easy to perceive, by his sentiments and sympathy at this trying period, that he understood 'life in earnest,' and was so fully engrossed in noble pursuits and designs of philanthropy, that all the mere butterflies of society served, in comparison, only to remind me of my mother's warning.

"Before my father died I was engaged to Mr. Seymour. This my father never knew; so I was spared the pain of disputing the question of high connexions with him. Mr. Seymour's father was a general officer, and all of his connexions in the same circle: still, I had to stand a regular siege of entreaties, satire, and misrepresentations, before I was allowed to rest in the pleasing contemplation of my choice. Of course, I heard often enough that Mr. Seymour would rather have my fortune than myself. But his sincerity, to some extent, was destined to be brought to the test; for my father, about a week before his death, sent for me to his bedside, saying that he had a matter of the last importance to communicate.

"It was then that I received the painful disclosure which Mr. Austin has heard from Lord Fenton. But I am most happy to say that, however culpable was my poor father's conduct, there was no such fraudulent intention or deliberate heartlessness as reports would unkindly imply.

"It is true that fifteen thousand pounds belonging to the orphan daughter of an old friend had all disappeared. But, the manner in which it happened admits of some sorry extenuation: though the story should be a warning to more classes than one.

"The property in question consisted in a number of foreign bonds, by presenting one *coupon* (a cutting, bearing a dividend warrant) of which, the interest was received half-yearly.

"Now, my father had for many years been borrowing money of his banker, pending the completion of one of the many mortgages that eventually ate up his whole estate.

"The security for these loans, while his estates lasted, and while money from each mortgage was actually coming in, he regarded as merely a nominal arrangement, and this parcel of trust-bonds passed backwards and forwards from his muniment-room to the bank a great many times.

"At last, however, the loans effected were of a less definite character, but, unhappily, the same bonds were given as security, though the power of redeeming them was far less certain. Still, these ill-fated bonds passed backwards and forwards, as before, several times with perfect safety: but, at last—such is the fate of all irregular practices in course of time—the money to redeem them never came to hand, and my father had, year after year, been paying the poor girl the interest, though there was no capital to guarantee it after his death.

"And now his days were numbered. This *robbery of the orphan*—for so he called it, in the language of severe self-reproach—weighed heavily on his mind, and he sent for me to unburthen his conscience, and to ask what could be done to save the poor innocent girl from ruin, and his own memory from indelible disgrace.

"I need hardly say that—when I calculated that by twelve years of self-denial I could remedy so great a wrong, and when my dear mother's lessons, of all the higher form of life being one of sacrifice for some noble object, recurred to my mind—I soon promised my father that I would liquidate the debt; and, indeed, I felt happy, at the time, in having a sphere so definite for a life of self-denial. One hundred a-year is all that I reserved for myself. Mr. Seymour was fully aware that, for twelve years, nearly all of my income would go to replace that orphan's fortune, and we must live chiefly upon his earnings; and now I feel myself the most happy of women, in having the means of making him comfortable, and wholly independent of all the little ways of the little world of Elkerton, for the rest of his days. His own noble and independent spirit he has never compromised—my only fear was lest his health would fail in the manly struggle to earn the means of an honourable livelihood, till such time as I was able to bid him retire and be happy.

"The experience I have gained by these years of labour is beyond all price. If money is worth what it will produce in happiness, then is every hundred become a thousand to me. I have learnt to enjoy simple pleasures, and to know that the purest are among those which gold can never buy.

"I cannot think, without pain, of the life of young ladies, nurtured as I once was, as the child of luxury and ease. I was the prey of my own restless feelings, miserable from apathy and *ennui*. Yet I was more wisely directed than most of those I saw around me. My dear mother accustomed me to diligent study, and always urged me to improve myself. Still, it was *myself* I was solely bent on improving. The advice was wise, as far as it went; but all my efforts began in self and ended in self. I felt dissatisfied, and knew not why. No sooner was I married to Mr. Seymour than he explained it all. He reminded me of my mother's precepts, that self-denial and self-sacrifice was the clue to the mysteries of this life—that the heart is so formed as to be cheered by the reflected rays of another's happiness, and that, as I said, in seeking the good of others we find our own.—'Whosoever will lose his life'—whosoever is *prepared* to make such a sacrifice—is in the proper state of mind 'to save it,' or to enjoy all that is worth living for.

"I soon perceived, under his guidance, that we are made up of activities nine parts, and passivities one—being capable of only one part in pleasure to nine parts in duty; and that, unless we prey upon something external, internal cravings will prey upon us. In other words, that the satisfaction of active and benevolent exertions is almost inexhaustible; whereas pleasures cloy, and 'by repetition souring turn to pain.' Labour is the doom of all. You may avoid the manual, but you increase the mental. You may avoid the burthen of the shoulders, but you increase the burthen on the heart and spirits.

"I have lived to realize what he has explained to me of the doom of labour. We are not only born to labour, but we are framed and formed for labour, insomuch that, without laborious days, we can enjoy no rest and no recreation. Our complex machinery, he says, is made chiefly for *motion*—active duty and useful exertion—it soon falls into disorder, and frets and grates with painful discord, in that state of indolence which is miscalled *rest*.

"The anxieties I have endured on Mr. Seymour's account, I certainly do hope that I shall never know again; but as to privations, my capacity of enjoyment has been greater as my means were less: and as to my exertions, they have been far less than the fatigues of a luxurious life; and every day has been ennobled with the object in view, and rendered interesting by a sense of usefulness and decided advancement.

"Though I have—I hope I may say—redeemed my father's

honour, yet I have little desire to return to the circle of his friends in Yorkshire.

"I am so far interested in the fate and fortunes of the poor around me, that this shall be the sphere of my future labours; and I look forward, with the greatest pleasure, to co-operate with the Rector of Elkerton."

And now I should lose no time in laying down my pen. The clouds that once gathered so thick around me are now dispersed; still, no one experienced in the ways of this world will mistake a pleasing lull for a long-continued calm.

Mr. and Mrs. Seymour are preparing to take a lease of Merton House—a residence of much elegance and convenience, about a mile from the Rectory: no little to the astonishment of the people of Elkerton—and of Manton, too—who are quite at a loss to explain how impotent has been their malice—poverty being so suddenly changed to affluence. An invitation from Lady Oxton to Mrs. Seymour has puzzled the people further still. I say, an invitation: for, years have been creeping on, and our noble friend has no longer the health or the energy that she once enjoyed. Indeed, not long since, she feelingly reproved some sanguine suggestion on which I ventured, with the beautiful words, "O spare me a little, that I may recover my strength before I go hence and be no more seen!" So, a few months hence I might have a less pleasing tale to tell.

Mrs. Horley can hardly endure to live away from our children, and has proposed to adopt little Ellen, "to bring her up according to her own ideas,"—ideas which differ so widely from ours, that we beg to decline.

My mother and Emily have arranged to join in housekeeping with Goody Keys; and Fanny cannot understand why a similar proposal from her was not accepted, and talked a long half-hour to convince me of the unreasonableness of the old lady.

As to the Emigration party, my clerk's brother, William Slack, has returned after an absence of two years. He said he had dug many a hole bigger than any he ever dug in my churchyard, and found no gold after all. He also tells all Elkerton that Mr. Horton's Colonial appointment has ended in this: that poor Jerry soon got the backache at the Diggings, and returned to Melbourne—that there his gentility was all in his way; and as to marketable qualifications, he had none. The last time Will saw Jerry, he was very dirty and very ragged, washing bottles at some ale and porter stores!

Brother Tom and his cousins are all doing well in New Zealand. In his last letter, Tom most characteristically bids me tell Uncle Ben, that however slow at finding a flaw in a settlement, he would back himself against all the big-wigs of Westminster in detecting the least symptom of disease in a flock of sheep.

Therefore, while the fortunes of the Rector of Elkerton are in a state to leave the most pleasing impression, he bids his sympathising friends—Farewell.

THE END.

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